STUDIES ON THE TANTRAS

THE RAMKRISHNA MISSION INSTITUTE OF CULTURE
CALCUTTA

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PREFACE

THERE is not much authentic literature about Tantra in the market today. No wonder there are many misconceptions about this great and useful science of religion. This book, a compilation of articles written by recognized scholars, may help remove some of these misconceptions.

SWAMI LOKESWARANANDA

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I

THE TĀNTRIKA MODE OF WORSHIP

Swami Madhavananda

MAN has a natural tendency to enjoyment, and does not generally welcome renunciation. He finds it difficult to call upon the Lord in a pure and simple way, and instinctively hugs to his bosom some amount of impurity in the midst of purity. Even though renouncing lust and wealth, he would like to have a passing glimpse of them. Hence it is that we find that immediately after stating distinctly in his sacred books that the worship of the Divine Mother should be performed in the purest way possible, he also makes room for some queer sensuous songs in them on the plea that these will be pleasing to the Goddess. There is nothing to be wondered at in this tendency of the human mind. It only shows in what strong and unbreakable ties of sense-attraction the Mother of the universe has bound Her creatures hand and foot. The idea is painfully impressed upon our minds that unless She out of Her infinite grace leads us out of this intricate maze, there is no way out for us. She only knows through what particular ways She would lead particular individuals across this ocean of ignorance.

In tracing the origin of the Tāntrika mode of worship we have to go back to the Vedic times when both enjoyment and renunciation were sought to be combined in the Karmakāṇḍa or the ritualistic portion of the Vedas. The goal of human life then seems to have been the regulated enjoyment of the sense-objects, by propitiating the gods through prayers and sacrifices. When in this way the mind was somewhat purified—when it became tolerably divested of lower desires, then the man took up the purer course of discipline prescribed in the Upaniṣads. But with the advent of the Buddhistic age things took a different turn. The methods of worship which were suited to pure-souled recluses alone, were prescribed for the ordinary householder, irrespective of his taste or capacity, while the laws of the State also lent countenance to this course. The result was that the Vedic sacrifices, which had in view the object of gradually weaning the aspirant's mind from the enjoyment of the senses, were replaced by a system

of clandestine worship—conducted in dreary, out of the way places, at dead of night—so that outsiders, and especially the emissaries of law, might get no clue to it. There is a good deal of truth in the statement that the Tāntrika rites were introduced by the Lord Śiva in place of Vedic rituals, which had fallen into disuse in course of time. For not only do they combine enjoyment and renunciation like the Vedic rites of old, but one finds in them an intimate connection between the ritualistic portion and the philosophy—which were distinct branches in the Vedic age. Each act of worship according to the Tantras necessitates some sort of meditation on the unity of the aspirant with the Lord—of the Jīva with the Paramātman. For instance, sitting down to worship, one has to mentally raise the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti—the resultant of the past impressions or the entire potentiality of a man supposed to be coiled up at the lowest extremity of the spinal column—to the thousand-petalled lotus in the brain, and think of this symbol of the aspirant himself as identified with God residing there. Then he imagines himself as separated from Him and the spirit of the Lord as condensed into the luminous form of his chosen Ideal. He projects Him out of himself on the image or symbol in front and proceeds to worship Him. After the worship is done the aspirant imagines the Deity to resume His former place in the brain. Now, on reflection it will be found that in the foregoing process of worship a fine attempt has been made to realize the ultimate object of human life, viz. identification with the Lord through love. It is true that only one in a thousand will be able to perform the above meditation in a proper way, but none can deny the fact that all at least can try to do so, and this in itself is a great advantage, for thereby they will slowly advance towards the goal. Thus, every Tāntrika rite invariably directs the mind of the worshipper to the underlying unity of Existence.

Another speciality of the Tantras is that they preach the motherhood of God, and simultaneously with it, a glorification of the woman. Neither in the Vedas nor in the Purāṇas do we come across this idea, which is only to be met with in the Tantras. In the Saṁhitā portion of the Vedas one finds only the rudiments of this idea, where the husband is instructed to look upon the body of his wife as sacred and to worship the gods therein, so that she may be the mother of a worthy child. The Tantras subli-

mated this old idea and developed it in new lines, with conspicuous results, for it was found suited to certain temperaments of the age in which these Tantras came into vogue. This may have been the origin of the Vīrācāra form of Tāntrika practice, in which wine and women play a part. The gifted authors of the Tantras were right in their assumption that the average man must go in for a share of the good things of life. So the best course of turning his mind Godward in the midst of all these enjoyments is somehow to create in his mind a sincere regard for the objects of enjoyment. For having this, he will not be carried away by his pursuit after the senses, but cry halt at some moment of his life and set himself to cultivate self-control and renunciation. Hence they declared that the woman's body is sacred, that one should always look upon a woman as goddess, and realizing the manifestation of the Mother of the universe in her, treat her with all respect. Maltreatment to women was strictly forbidden.

But in spite of all this forethought on the part of the inaugurators of this system, the followers of this school also became, with the lapse of time, slaves to passion, and instead of trying to realize God, they sought to acquire small physical powers with the help of Tāntrika rites. This was the age which marked the origin of such grotesque forms of worship as that of ghosts and demons, and led to the abominations which we find in the Tantras of to-day. Hence, in every Tantra one meets with a two-fold division—a higher and a lower form of worship, and people choose between them according to their taste.

The main idea of the Tantras then is the deification of the objects of the senses, which ever lure mankind and bind them in an endless chain of births and deaths, preventing their realization of God. The Tantras seek to accustom the struggling soul to look upon these sense-objects as visible representations of the Lord, so that their inordinate attachment to them may be curbed. According to the qualifications of the aspirants, the Tantras prescribe three modes of practice. They are called Paśu-bhāva, Vīra-bhāva, and Divya-bhāva,—or animal, heroic, and divine,—in an ascending order. In the devotee of the first type there is a predominance of animal propensity. For him the instruction is that he should avoid all objects of temptation as far as he can and engage himself in *japam* and such other practices with strict regard for purity. In the second class of aspirants, who are com-

paratively advanced, the devotion to God supersedes the cravings of the senses, and the sense-attractions only heighten their longing for God. So they are advised to live in the midst of these temptations and try to concentrate their mind on the Lord, unshaken by those jarring elements in the outside world. While the third and the highest type of Sādhaka is he who is far above the reach of the sense-impulses—which have been swept away from him by a tidal wave of yearning for God-realization—and to whom the practice of truth, forgiveness, compassion, contentment, and such other attributes has become natural like respiration. These are the general distinctions among the three classes of Tāntrika aspirants. From what has been written above the readers will perceive that the practices of the Tantras will bear fruit if only the aspirant makes self-control the bed-rock of his endeavours, and in default of this he will be no better—if not worse—than an ordinary man.

The Tāntrika influence permeates every system of worship in India at the present day, including Vaiṣṇavism. Only, the Vaiṣṇavite Ācāryas have introduced certain changes in the mode of worship of the Tantras, which are worth noting. They considered dualistic teachings more beneficial to men, and accordingly laid stress only on that portion of the Tāntrika rites, viz. its theory of Mantras and external worship. Into this worship they also infused a new spirit, and advised people to serve the Lord according to the promptings of their heart. The Tāntrika gods purify the offerings made to them by their sight only, and the devotee by partaking of this consecrated food gradually becomes pure in mind. The Vaiṣṇava reformers taught that the gods take the essence of those offerings, and not only that, but in certain cases they also take material quantities of the food, which depends on the devotion of the aspirant. Among many other changes these teachers introduced into the method of worship, the most important was the emphasis they laid on the preliminary course of Tāntrika worship—the Paśu-bhāva—and they gave strict injunctions about purity being observed in every act of the aspirant—his food and mode of life and everything. They also laid great stress on *japam* or repetition of the Lord's name as a means to God-realization.

But in course of time evils crept into this cult also. Forgetting the inner significance of the Master's teachings, the followers

adopted measures to suit their own tastes. The Ācāryas had cited the great attraction between a lover and his mistress as an example to emulate in their quest after God. But they went to the length of carrying it into actual practice, and thus made a horrible compromise between the old, pure form of worship and their own tendencies. It is the same old story everywhere.

From the above sketch another thing will have struck the reader. It is this that for the criticisms usually levelled against the Tantras—or for the matter of that, any abused form of practice—not the Tantras but the innate tendency of man to gravitate towards enjoyment, is responsible. The Tāntrika rites can be practised in the purest form possible, without a touch of wine or sex-indulgence, and this is amply proved in the lives of numerous saints of this school.*

* Adapted from Swami Saradananda's *Līlāprasaṅga: Prabuddha Bharata*, October 1923, pp. 373-378.

II

EVOLUTION OF THE TANTRAS

P. C. Bagchi

PLACE OF THE TANTRAS IN INDIAN SPIRITUAL LORE

THE Tantras have remained a neglected branch of study, in spite of the fact that they include a very considerable number of texts, most of them still in manuscript, varying in date from the fifth century to the nineteenth. Some relegate them to the class of black magic, whereas others consider them full of obscenities and unfit for the study of a man of good taste. These contentions, however, do not represent the whole truth. It cannot be denied that in some texts there is what may be called black magic, and there are also a few texts full of obscenities; but these do not form the main bulk of the Tāntric literature. They also do not represent the Tāntric *sādhanā* at its best. The Tāntric literature essentially represents a very important part of Indian spiritual lore, so far as its practical aspect is concerned. A failure to appreciate its real significance renders our understanding of the ancient spiritual knowledge shallow and superficial.

The word '*tantra*' is derived in the *Kāśikāvṛtti* from the root '*tan*', to spread, but some later writers have professed to derive it from the root '*tatri*' or '*tantri*', meaning origination or knowledge. In a special sense it means 'the scripture by which knowledge is spread' (*tanyate vistāryate jñānam anena iti tantram*). But any branch of knowledge is not called Tantra now, though at one time this term seems to have borne diverse meanings. It is a cultural discipline in a wide sense, and, when used in a more limited sense, it is spiritual knowledge of a technical nature. When Śaṅkara calls Sāṁkhya a Tantra (as *Sāṁkhya-kārikā* itself does in *kārikā*, 70), he looks upon it as a technical branch of spiritual knowledge. In one standard Tāntric text, the *Kāmikāgama*, Tantra is defined as a class of texts 'which promulgates profound matters concerning *tattva* and *mantra* (*tanoti*

vipulān arthān tattvamantra-samanvitān).[1] The two words *tattva* and *mantra* have a technical sense: *tattva* means the science of the cosmic principles, while *mantra* means the science of the mystic sound. Tantra therefore concerns the application of those sciences with a view to the attainment of spiritual ascendancy.

The Tantra is regarded as a Śruti or Āgama, 'revelation', as opposed to a Smṛti or Nigama, 'tradition'. It is thus classed with the Vedas. It is usually defined as '*Śrutiśākhāviśeṣaḥ*', a particular branch of the Vedas. This claim is strongly maintained not only by the later Tantras, but also by the earlier ones. One of the oldest Tantras available in manuscript, *Niśvāsatattva Saṁhitā*, holds that the Tantra is the culmination of the esoteric science of the Vedānta and the Sāṁkhya. In fact, it combines with the ultimate reality of Brahman or Śiva the validity of the world as an expression of His Śakti. The consort of Śiva therefore is first taught the Vedānta, then the twenty-five Sāṁkhyas,[2] and after that the *Śiva Tantra*. *Piṅgalāmata*, which is an equally old Tāntric text, says, 'The Tantra, first communicated by Śiva, came down through tradition. It is Āgama with the characteristics of *chandas* (Vedas).'[3]

The later Tantras reiterate the same claim. The *Kulārṇava Tantra* says (II. 140-41) that *kuladharma* is based on, and inspired by, the truth of the Vedas. In the same place, Śiva cites passages from the Śruti in support of His doctrine. *Prapañcasāra* and other Tantras cite *vaidika-mahāvākyas* and *mantras*; and as *mantras* are a part of the Vedas, the *Meru Tantra* says that the Tantra is a part of the Vedas.[4] The *Niruttara Tantra* calls the Tantra the fifth Veda, and *Kulācāra* the fifth *āśrama*,[5] which follows all others. The *Matsyasūkta-mahātantra* says that the disciple must be pure of soul and a knower of the Vedas (XIII). He who is devoid of *vaidikakriyā* is disqualified.[6] The *Gandharva Tantra* says that the Tāntric *sādhaka* must be a believer in the Vedas, ever attached to Brahman, living in Brahman, and taking

[1] Woodroffe, *Shakti and Shakta* (Second Ed.), pp. 18-19. I have differed from Woodroffe's interpretation of the verses.

[2] The Sāṁkhya categories.

[3] P. C. Bagchi, *Studies in the Tantras*, p. 106.

[4] *Prāṇatoṣiṇī*, 70.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Mahārudra Yāmala*, I. 15; II. 2. *Prāṇatoṣiṇī*, 108.

shelter with Brahman.[7] The *Kulārṇava Tantra* says that there is no knowledge higher than that of the Vedas and no doctrine equal to the *kaula* (III.113).[8]

This claim of the Tantras to be regarded as the Śruti, however preposterous it might appear, is perfectly logical. Our knowledge of the Śiva Tantras being limited, our judgement in this matter has often been guided by the later heterodox Tantras. In fact, a good deal of the heterodox element has been introduced into the Tantras from time to time, on account of the general community of purpose in the esoteric practices of all grades.

THE VEDAS AND THE TANTRAS

The essence of the Vedic religion is ritualistic. Whatever might have been the nature of the Vedic sacrifice in the early Vedic period, it developed into a highly mystical ritual in course of time. It assumed the character of a sort of magical operation, independent of the gods, efficacious by its own force, and capable of producing good as well as bad effects. The chief aim was ascendancy over the forces of nature, in order to guide them in the interests of the sacrificer. Correct recitation of the *mantras* was the most important means of producing the desired effect. The *mantras* invoke the gods, the embodiments of natural forces, to the sacrificial altar. The gods are imagined to come down to the altar by the force of the ritual and the recitation of the *mantras*. The ritual centres round the idea of bringing about the union of two principles, one male and the other female. The accomplishment of this union leads to the success of the ritual.[9]

The religious attitude in the Tantras is fundamentally the same as in the Vedic ritual. The Tāntric *sādhanā* also concerns the attainment of ascendancy over the forces of nature by the exoteric ritual of the Vedic type, as well as by the esoteric ritual involving the yogic practice, its aim being the union of the two principles, the Śiva and the Śakti. The Tantras not only use new symbols, and simplify the Vedic rituals to some extent, but introduce a greater complexity in the esoteric portion. The beginn-

[7] *Prāṇatoṣiṇī*, 6.

[8] Woodroffe, *op. cit.*, 45.

[9] For this interpretation of the Vedic ritual, see Bergaigne, *La Religion Vedique*.

ing of this esoteric turn of the ritual may also be found in the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads. To give one example, it is said in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*: 'The head is the chariot of Soma; the mouth, the *āhavanīya* fire; the crown of the head, the sacrificial post; the belly, the cart-shed; the feet, the two fires; the sacrificial implements, corresponding to limbs . . .' (I. 3. 2-3).[10] A similar esotericism is to be found in the opening verses of the *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, which repeat a *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* account. The Tantras place greater emphasis on this esoteric sacrifice.

From this point of view, it may be argued that 'the Tantras emerged out of the Vedic religion and were then developed as a distinct type of esoteric knowledge. The Vedic ritual continued to be practised even after the Tantra had been well established. It is practised to some extent even now, but it has survived more in form than in spirit. The more vigorous aspect of the Vedic religion was continued and developed in the Tantras.

The Vedic sacrifice was a technical operation capable of producing effects desired by the sacrificer. It could thus be used for both good and bad purposes, for both higher and lower ends. Thus one of its aspects could easily be developed into what is usually called black magic, and in the Vedic texts we already have traces of this. The *Sāmavidhāna Brāhmaṇa* and the *Adbhutādhyāya Brāhmaṇa*, which is a part of the *Ṣaḍviṁśa Brāhmaṇa*, are full of references to such practices. The *Atharva-Veda* is commonly believed to be a code of such magical rites. In one place, the *Ṣaḍvimśa Brāhmaṇa* says: 'If one wants to assure victory to one's army, one should go away from the camp, cut some herbs at both ends, and throw them in the direction of the enemy uttering the *mantra* "*Prāsahe kas tvā paśyati* (Prāsahā, who sees you?). . ." . Thus the army of the enemy disappears and is dissipated . . .'.[11] This will serve to explain the occurrence of the magic practices frequently referred to in the Tāntric literature of later times. It is not impossible that in many cases they are derived from the religious practices of a primitive society assimilated into the Vedic society; but, logically speaking, they also represent a phase of the Vedic ritual, not practised for higher spiritual

[10] Lévi, *La Doctrine du sacrifice dans es Brāhmaṇas*, p. 78.
[11] Lévi, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

purposes, but for certain lower ends in which a group of people had always some interest.

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TANTRAS

The origin and development of the Tantras as a special class of literature, and Tantra as a special mode of *sādhanā*, were intimately connected with the rise of Śaivism and the Pāñcarātra, the Sāṁkhya-Yoga supplying them with a philosophical background. Both Śaivism, under the name of Pāśupata, and Pāñcarātra, which seems to be very old, are referred to for the first time in the Nārāyaṇīya section of *Mahābhārata*.

The early canonical literature of the Pāñcarātra is lost. But whatever literature of this sect as well as of other contemporary ones has come down to us shows that it has always been regarded as a Tantra. One such text, the *Sātvata Saṁhitā*, studied by R. G. Bhandarkar, describes the system as *rahasyāmnāya*—'a secret method of *sādhanā*'. It further says: 'This Śāstra, along with *rahasya*, is fruitful to those who have gone through *yoga* with its eight parts, and whose soul is devoted to mental sacrifice. The *yogins*, who are Brāhmaṇas guided by the Vedas and who have given up the mixed worship, are competent for the worship of the single one, dwelling in the heart. The three orders, the Kṣatriya and others, and those who are *prapanna* or have resorted to self-surrender, are competent for the worship of the four *vyūhas* accompanied by *mantras*.'[12] The text also gives a mystic arrangement of letters and formulae and the meditations on them. It deals with the mystic modes of worship by means of *mantras* in various dispositions.

The Pāñcarātra, however, remained restrained in its development. It is Śaivism which supplied a more propitious ground for the development of the Tantras. The *Mahābhārata* says that the Pāśupata doctrines were first preached by Śiva-Śrīkaṇṭha. It has been suggested that this Śrīkaṇṭha was probably a human teacher. *Piṅgalāmata*, a Tāntric work preserved in Nepal in an old manuscript of A.D. 1174, speaks of Bhagavat Śrīkaṇṭhanātha as its author. Lakulīśa was probably his disciple. Lakulīśa and his disciples are mentioned in an inscription of Candragupta II

[12] R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, and Minor Religious Systems*, p. 40.

of the Gupta dynasty. According to this inscription, Lakulīśa had four disciples: Kuśika, Garga, Mitra, and Kauruṣya. Variants of the last three names are found in the Purāṇas. They lived about ten generations before the time of Candragupta II. This would place Lakulīśa almost in the time of Patañjali who first speaks of Śiva-bhāgavatas in his *Mahābhāṣya*. Patañjali is mentioned in the inscriptions of Java along with the four disciples of Lakulīśa as 'five *devatās*'.[13]

Thus, Pāśupata was the oldest form of Śaivism prevalent in North India. This is what may be called Āgamānta Śaivism. The school possessed a considerable literature called Āgamas, a number of which are preserved in old manuscripts in the North Indian script of the eighth and ninth centuries. The literature must have come into existence at least in the Gupta period. The Āgamas were eighteen in number according to one tradition and twenty-eight according to another.[14]

THE ŚIVA TANTRAS

The eighteen Āgamas, which are also called Śiva Tantras, are the following: (1) *Vijaya*, (2) *Nisvāsa*, (3) *Svāyambhūva*, (4) *Vātula*, (5) *Vīrabhadra*, (6) *Raurava*, (7) *Mākuṭa*, (8) *Vīreśa*, (9) *Candrahāsa*, (10) *Jñāna*, (11) *Mukhabimba*, (12) *Prodgīta*, (13) *Lalita*, (14) *Siddha*, (15) *Santāna*, (16) *Sarvodgīta*, (17) *Kiraṇa*, and (18) *Pārameśvara*. Of these *Niśvāsa*, *Kiraṇa*, and *Pārameśvara* are still preserved in Nepal in manuscripts of the eighth and ninth centuries. There is also a copy of *Pārameśvara* in the Cambridge collection, the manuscript being dated A.D. 859. *Niśvāsa Tantra* itself mentions these eighteen Āgamas as constituting the Śiva-śāstra transmitted by Rudra. It also mentions ten more Śiva Tantras transmitted by Sadāśiva.[15], (1) *Kāmika*, (2) *Yogada* (?), (3) *Divya*, (4) *Karaṇa* (*Kiraṇa*?), (5) *Ajita*, (6) *Dīpta*, (7) *Sūkṣma*, (8) *Sahasra*, (9) *Asta* (?), (10) *Aṁśubheda*. The two lists might be two different ways of computing the same literature. Variations in the titles of some of these Āgamas are known, and some names are obviously corrupt.

[13] P. C. Bagchi, 'Religion of Bengal' in *History of Bengal*, I. pp. 405-6.

[14] P. C. Bagchi, *Studies in the Tantras*, pp. 4, 95.

[15] The difference in number and names of books is due to different sources.

The Āgamas or Śiva Tantras have ritualistic character.[16] They deal with the main elements of the Vedic ritual, such as *homa*, *abhiṣeka*, *dīkṣā*, *yajñaprakaraṇa*, and, in addition to these, the method of erecting a Śiva temple (instead of a sacrificial altar), the mode of worshipping Śiva, *yoga*, *mukti* (salvation), etc. These texts therefore hold that for *sādhanā* there is need of exoteric ritual of the Vedic type, as well as of esoteric practice like *yoga*. The purpose is the attainment of salvation (*mukti*). It maintains that the highest caste, the Brāhamaṇa, is alone eligible for the *sādhanā*. The god invoked is not any of the old gods of the Vedic pantheon, but Śiva. The texts further profess that they represent the culmination of a spiritual knowledge, the beginning of which is found in the Vedānta and the Sāṁkhya. Although a chronological scheme is not possible in the present state of our knowledge of the Tantras, it appears to me that the Tantras of the Āgama type were prevalent during the first five or six centuries of the Christian era, from the Kuṣāṇa period down to the end of the Gupta period.

THE YĀMALAS

The next phase in the development of the Tantras is probably represented by a class of literature called Yāmala.[17] The principal Yāmalas are eight in number: *Rudra*, *Kanda* (*Skanda*), *Brahma*, *Viṣṇu*, *Yama*, *Vāyu*, *Kuvera*, and *Indra*. One of the principal Yāmala texts, the *Brahma Yāmala*, is preserved in Nepal in a manuscript of A.D. 1052. It gives a list of the eight Yāmalas and says that they were communicated by the eight Bhairavas—Svacchanda, Krodha, Unmatta, Ugra, Kapālin, Jhaṅkāra, Śekhara, and Vijaya. Whereas the original Śiva Tantras or Āgamas represent the Rudra or Sadāśiva tradition, the Yāmalas represent the Bhairava tradition. Bhairavas seem to have been human teachers who had attained complete spiritual emancipation and had almost become Śiva. Two other old texts belong to the Yāmala group. They are *Piṅgalāmata* and *Jayadratha Yāmala*. *Piṅgalāmata* explicitly states that the *Jayadratha Yāmala*, an extensive work of about 24,000 *ślokas* (*caturviṁśati-sahasra*), is a

[16] P. C.Bagchi, *Studies in the Tantras*, p. 94.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

supplement to *Brahma Yāmala*, and that *Piṅgalāmata* itself is a supplement to *Jayadratha*. The *Jayadratha Yāmala* also exists in a manuscript of about the same period; but as the special mode of *sādhanā* called *śiraścheda* which it advocates was introduced in the Hindu colony of Kambuja (Cambodia) in the early ninth century, it must have existed in India much earlier. The Yāmala literature with its supplements may therefore be reasonably supposed to have come into existence at least between the sixth and ninth centuries. Additions might have been made to the supplementary texts down to the tenth centuiy. The existence of the principal Yāmalas, excepting the *Brahma Yāmala*, is not known to us. There are fragments of the *Rudra Yāmala* published in Bengal, but it is difficult to say how far they have preserved the old text.

The Yāmalas indicate a great development in the Tāntric *sādhanā*, not only by trying to define for the first time the various Tāntric traditions, but also by introducing a great variety of cults of new gods and goddesses. They give us for the first time a well-developed Tāntric pantheon and apparently affiliate in many cases a large number of local cults, and open up the field of Tāntric *sādhanā* to people of other castes. While preserving the orthodox tradition of the earlier period, they thus assume a heterodox character.

In regard to the transmission of the Tāntric lore, the *Brahma Yāmala* gives an interesting account,[18] according to which Īśvara communicated the secret knowledge to Śrīkaṇṭha; the latter incarnated himself in a village called Kaṇavīra near Prayāga. He communicated the Tantras in one hundred and twenty-five thousand *anuṣṭubh ślokas* to various disciples. One of the recipients was a Bhairava. That Bhairava communicated it to various other Bhairavas, to wit, Krodha Kapāla, Padma. Padma Bhairava transmitted it to Devadatta, a Brāhmaṇa of the Oḍra country. Devadatta had fourteen disciples: Rakta Bhairava, Jvālā, Hela, Vāma, Vijaya of Madhyadeśa, Sīśaṁsa of Saurāṣṭra, Gajakarṇa, Caṇḍa of Sindhu, and others. It is interesting to note that many of them are said to have been Atharvan Brāhmaṇas, while Sīśaṁsa is said to have been a Śūdra:

[18] *Ibid.*, pp.102-5.

THREE CURRENTS OF TĀNTRIC TRADITIONS

The same text further determines the Tāntric traditions according to *srotas* (current). There are three currents according to it, *dakṣiṇa*, *vāma*, and *madhyama*. They represent the three *śaktis* of Śiva and are characterized respectively by the predominance of each of the three *guṇas*, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. The Tantras of each class follow a particular line of *sādhanā*. Hence there are three classes of Tantras: *dakṣiṇa*, which is characterized by *sattva*, is pure (*śuddha*); *vāma*, which is characterized by *rajas*, is mixed (*vimiśra*); and *madhyama*, characterized by *tamas*, is impure (*aśuddha*). The *dakṣiṇa* current issued from the right mouth of Śiva. It is classified according to the four *pīṭhas* (modes of *sādhanā*) and also according to the degree of purity. The four *pīṭhas* are *vidyā*, *mantra*, *mudrā*, and *maṇḍala*. The eight Bhairavas, givers of the eight Yāmalas mentioned before, belong to the *vidyāpīṭha*. The Tantras belonging to this *pīṭha* are *Yoginījāla*, *Yoginīhṛdaya*, *Mantramālinī*, *Aghoreśī*, *Aghoreśvarī*, *Krīḍāghoreśvarī*, *Lākinīkalpa*, *Mārīcī*, *Mahāmārīcī*, and *Ugravidyāgaṇa*. The text also mentions the Bhairavas belonging to the *mantrapīṭha* and says that the two *pīṭhas*, *mantra* and *mudrā*, are closely connected with each other. The *maṇḍalas*, according to the text, are determined by gods like Rudra or Śiva, who are derived from the *mudrāpīṭha*. The *madhyama* current issues from the upper mouth of Śiva. The Tantras belonging to this class are *Vijaya*, *Niśvāsa*, *Svāyambhūva*, *Vātula*, *Vīrabhadra*, *Raurava*, *Mākuṭa*, and *Vīreśa*. The text then says that 'the Tantras of a higher class' are *Candrajñāna*, *Bimba*, *Prodgīta*, *Lalita*, *Siddha*, *Santāna*, *Sarvodgīta*, *Kiraṇa*, and *Pārameśvara*. Amongst those who promulgated these Tantras, there are the names of human teachers, such as Uśanas, Bṛhaspati, Dadhīci, Kaca, Lakulīśa, Sanatkumāra, and a few others. We have not found any explicit mention of the Tantras of the *vāma* current. Probably they are included in the list of Āgamas mentioned as 'the Tantras of a higher class'.

SOME OTHER TĀNTRIC SĀDHANĀS

The *Brahma Yāmala* also speaks of the worship of the local deities. It says in one place that one of the disciples of Krodha Bhairava worshipped the goddess Bṛhodarī on the outskirts of a

village called Bṛhodarī and thus attained spiritual knowledge. This obviously indicates the process of assimilation of the local cults by the Tantras.

The two supplements of *Brahma Yāmala*, *Jayadratha Yāmala* and *Piṅgalāmata*, mention a much greater variety of Tantras and *sādhanās*. *Piṅgalāmata* mentions two classes of Tantras belonging to it: Kāmarūpī and Uḍḍiyānī.[19] These two are place-names, Uḍḍiyāna being in the north-west (Swat valley) and Kāmarūpa being in Assam. It gives a new list of seven supplements to *Brahma Yāmala*, namely, *Daurvāsya*, *Paicika*, *Sārasvatamata*, *Jayadratha*, *Phetkāra*, *Raktādya* (?), and *Lampaṭādya* (?). *Jayadratha*, again, is said to have consisted of seven Sūtras: *Sūtra*, *Uttarasūtra*, *Śaktisūtra*, *Kriyāsūtra*, *Vimalajñāna*, and *Sarvasandoha*.[20] *Piṅgalāmata* belongs to the *Kriyāsūtra* of *Jayadratha*.

Jayadratha Yāmala is divided into four sections called *ṣaṭka*, each containing six thousand *ślokas*.[21] The text gives detailed information on the various modes of Tāntric *sādhanā*, together with a description of the various branches of the Tāntric literature. Besides the eight Yāmalas, there are three other classes of supplementary Tantras called *maṅgalāṣṭaka*, *cakrāṣṭaka*, and *śikhāṣṭaka*. The eight *maṅgalas* are *Bhairavamaṅgala*, *Candragarbha Śanimaṅgala* (?), *Sumaṅgala*, *Sarvamaṅgala*, *Vijayamaṅgala*, *Ugramaṅgala*, and *Sadbhāvamaṅgala*. The eight *cakras* are *Svaracakra*, *Varṇanāḍi*, *Guhyakākhya*, *Kālacakra*, *Saura*, *Haya* (?), and *Soma*.[22] The eight *śikhās* are *Śaukrī*, *Mandā*, *Mahocchuṣmā*, *Bhairavī*, *Samvarā*, *Prapañcakī*, *Mātṛbhedī*, and *Rudrakālī*. The text also mentions the names of the sages who had promulgated each class of *aṣṭakas*.

The *Jayadratha Yāmala* mentions the cults of a large number of divinities, mostly Śaktis, such as Kālikā, Saṅkarṣaṇī, Kālasaṅkarṣaṇī, Carcikā, Ḍambarakālī, Gahaneśvarī, Ekatārā, Śavaśabarī, Vajravatī, Rakṣākālī, Indīvarakālikā, Dhanadakālikā, Ramaṇīkālikā, Īśānakālikā, Mantramātā, Jīvakālī, Saptākṣarā, Ṛkṣakarṇī, Bhairavaḍākinī, Kālāntakī, Vīryakālī, Prajñākālī,

[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 105 ff.

[20] The manuscript from Nepal on which this list is based does not mention the name of the seventh.

[21] P. C. Bagchi, *Studies in the Tantras*, pp. 109 ff.

[22] The manuscript from Nepal does not mention the name of the eighth.

Saptārṇakālī, and Siddhilakṣmī. The text further mentions twenty-five kinds of *dīkṣā*, which clearly imply various modes of *sādhanā: tattva-dīkṣā, bhūvana-, pāda-, varṇa-, mantra-, śakti-, nāda-, prāṇa-, jīva-, cora-, sparśa-, vedha-, vastra-, ghaṭa-, sadyo-nirvāṇa-, nirvāṇa-, āloka-, jñāna-, dīkṣā*, etc.

The supplementary literature of the Yāmala group indicates a new orientation of the Tāntric culture. The *sādhanās* of the Āgamas assume in them a more pronounced character of Śāktism. The religion of the Āgamas apparently developed through two channels, one exoteric and the other esoteric. The former was continued as pure Śaivism with greater emphasis on the devotional aspect of the worship of Śiva-Paśupati, with a view to attaining salvation. The latter was continued as Śāktism with greater emphasis on the various Śakti cults, not so much to attain salvation as to gain ascendancy over the forces of nature, and to carry on experiments with them in order to gain a detailed knowledge of their working. Salvation was too small a goal for the latter. The later literature of pure Śaivism ceases to be called Tantra. Tantra proper became more Śāktic in character. This character of Tantra became definitely established by the tenth century.

THE BUDDHIST TANTRAS

Buddhism also had developed a Tāntric aspect by this period. The Buddhist Tantras came into existence, according to the Tibetan evidence, after the time of Dharmakīrti. Their origin as a distinct class of literature and a mode of *sādhanā* may be placed in the seventh century, and they underwent great development during the three succeeding centuries. A large number of texts was compiled in this period, and an imposing pantheon grew up. There are common elements as well as common bases in the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist Tantras; but it would be wrong to suppose that the Buddhist Tantra is nothing but a borrowed religion. Even when the elements and bases are common, the Buddhists use different symbols in explaining their intricate esoteric systems.

Buddhist mysticism assumed three different forms in this period, viz. Vajrayāna, Sahajayāna, and Kālacakrayāna, and had the general designation of Mantranaya. The philosophical background of these sects is supplied by the Mādhyamika and Yogā-

cāra systems of philosophy. Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna represented two aspects of the same mysticism, the first dealing with mystic ritualism of a more exoteric nature, and the second laying more stress on the esoteric aspect. The first attaches importance to *mantra*, *mudrā*, and *maṇḍala*, and maintains that their practice is necessary for the awakening of psychic energy (*śakti*). The word for Śakti in these schools is Prajñā, which is the female principle, the male being Vajra. The Sahajayāna is said to have been developed by a set of mystics called Siddhas, who are traditionally believed to have been eighty-four in number. They seem to have flourished in the tenth and eleventh centuries. They discard every kind of formalism and place emphasis on the cultivation of the state of *sahaja*. It is by discarding all sorts of knowledge derived from outward sources, and by giving up formalism of all kinds, that this state can be brought about. The Tibetan texts say that Kālacakrayāna was developed outside India in a country called Sambhala, and was introduced into Bengal in the Pāla period. One of the great teachers of the school, Abhayākaragupta, was a contemporary of King Rāmapāla and wrote a number of books. The school attaches importance, in the matter of *sādhanā*, to the time factor, viz, *muhūrta*, *tithi*, *nakṣatra*, *rāśi*, etc. Thus astronomy and astrology came to be associated with the practice of *yoga*.

From about the tenth and eleventh centuries, there began a very complicated period of development of the Tāntric culture. The Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist sects (and sometimes the Jaina also) became mixed up, mainly on account of the decadence of Buddhism as a powerful religion in India. All that remained of it was a mystic form, very similar to Śāktism in its essence. The fusion of the two Tantras gave birth to new forms of esoteric religion.

THE BRĀHMAṆICAL TANTRAS

So far as the Brāhmaṇical Tantras of this period are concerned, we get a detailed picture of the new synthetic outlook in *Sammoha* (also called *Sammohana*) *Tantra*.[23] In the general classification of

[23] P. C. Bagchi, *Studies in the Tantras*, pp. 96 ff. This discussion on the *Sammoha Tantra* is based on an old manuscript of the text in the Nepal State Library, and not on the later version of the text available in print.

the *pīṭhas* or modes of *sādhanā*, the principal ones according to it are: *vidyāpīṭha, śaktipīṭha, śaivapīṭha, gaṇeśapīṭha, candrapīṭha, svāyambhuvapīṭha, cīnapīṭha, bauddhapīṭha,* and *vaidikapīṭha*.

The *Sammoha Tantra* first deals with the various traditions and *mantras* of the Kālikāmata. The Kālikās are of nine kinds, Saṅkarṣaṇī, Siddhakālī, Kubjikā, Sundarī, Mahākhiladeveśī, Śrīmat-siddhakarālīkā, Pratyaṅgirā, Śéṣikā, and Śeṣamantrā. A number of special cults are then enumerated: one cult of Jayā, three cults of Sundarī, two of Tārā, three of Kālī, one of Chinnā, two of Dhūmrā and Mātaṅgī, and two of Siddhavidyā. It further mentions twenty-four cults of the Vaiṣṇavas, two of the Sauras, and five of the Gāṇapatyas.

The text then speaks of *āmnāya* and the geographical classification of the Tantras. From the geographical point of view, the Tantras are divided into four classes, viz. Kerala, Kāśmīra, Gauḍa, and Vilāsa (?). The Kerala class is said to prevail in all countries from Aṅga to Mālava, the Kāśmīra class from Madra to Nepāla, the Gauḍa class from Śilahaṭṭa to Sindhu, while the Vilāsa class is found in all countries. There are six *āmnāyas: pūrva* (eastern), *dakṣiṇa* (southern), *paścima* (western), *uttara* (northern), *ūrdhva* (upper), and *pātāla* (nether). Another and a more important classification, made according to the nature of the *sādhanā*, is into *divya, kaula,* and *vāma*. Each of these again has two sects, *hārda* (inner) and *bāhya* (outer).

The text then mentions the number of Tantras belonging to each class. These numbers may in some cases be fictitious, but they show that the writer had a vague idea that each class contained a large literature. It says that the country of Cīna possesses one hundred principal Tantras and seven subsidiary ones, Draviḍa twenty principal and twenty subsidiary, the Jaina eighteen principal and twenty subsidiary, Kāśmīra one hundred principal and ten subsidiary, and Gauḍa twenty-seven principal and sixteen subsidiary ones:

About the number of Tantras belonging to the principal Brāhmaṇical sects, it gives the following:

(i) Śaiva Tantras: 32 Tantras, 325 Upatantras, 10 Saṁhitās, 5 Arṇavas, 2 Yāmalas, 3 Ḍāmaras, 1 Uddāla, 2 Uḍḍīśas, 8 Kalpas, 8 Upasaṅkhyās, 2 Cūḍāmaṇis, 2 Cintāmaṇis, and 2 Vimarṣiṇīs.

(ii) Vaiṣṇava Tantras: 75 Tantras, 205 Upatantras, 20 Kalpas, 8 Saṁhitās, 1 Arṇavaka, 5 Kakṣapuṭīs, 8 Cūḍāmaṇis, 2 Cintā-

maṇis, 2 Uḍḍīśas, 2 Ḍāmaras, 1 Yāmala, 5 Purāṇas, 3 Tattvabodha-vimarṣinīs, and 2 Amṛtatarpaṇas (?).

(iii) Saura Tantras: 30 Tantras, 96 Upatantras, 4 Saṁhitās, 2 Upasaṁhitās, 5 Purānas, 10 Kalpas, 2 Kakṣapuṭīs, 3 Tattvas, 3 Vimarṣiṇīs, 3 Cūḍāmanis, 2 Ḍāmaras, 2 Yāmalas, 5 Uddālas, 2 Avatāras, 2 Uḍḍīśas, 3 Amṛtas, 3 Darpaṇas, and 3 Kalpas.

(iv) Gāṇapatya Tantras: 50 Tantras, 25 Upatantras, 2 Purāṇas, 3 Sāgaras, 3 Darpaṇas, 5 Amṛtas, 9 Kalpakas, 3 Kakṣapuṭīs, 2 Vimarṣiṇīs, 2 Tattvas, 2 Uḍḍīśas, 3 Cūḍāmaṇis, 3 Cintāmaṇis, 1 Ḍāmara, 1 Candrayāmala, and 8 Pāñcarātras.

(v) Bauddha Tantras (not quite clear in the text): 4 Avatarṇakas, 5 Sūktas, 2 Cintāmaṇis, 9 Purāṇas, 3 Upasaṁjñās, 2 Kakṣapuṭīs, 3 Kalpadrumas, 2 Kāmadhenus, 3 Svabhāvas, and 5 Tattvas.

The text further gives a detailed description of the Vidyās or cults, according to the various schools. The objects of worship in these cults were the following goddesses: Aindrī, Gāyatrī, Brahmavidyā, Ardhanārīśvarī, Śrutidharī, Mātṛkā, Sarasvatī, Śāmbhavī, Śrīparāparā, Kāmarājeśvarī, Tripurā-bhairavī, Caitanya-bhairavī, Rudra-śakti, Kāmeśvarī, Mahā-tripurā-bhairavī, Aghora-bhairavī, Tripurā-nikṛnta-bhairavī, Annapūrṇā, Kukkuṭā, Śivā, Bhogavatī, Kubjikā, Saṇkarṣaṇī, Kriyāsaṇkarṣaṇī, Kālasaṇkarṣaṇī, Mahāvidyā, Śūlinī, Mādhavī, Caṇḍayogeśvarī, Cāmuṇḍā, Ratnavidyā, Siddhavidyā, Māyā, Māyāvatī, Ramā, Dhanadā, Śabarī, Durgā, Reṇukā, Sāmrājyasundarī, Rājarājeśvarī, Mahā-sāmrājyavidyā, Yakṣiṇī, Kinnarī, Siddhi, Pūtanā, Kavacā, Kuṣmāṇḍinī, Agastyavidyā, Vāgvādinī, Cāṇḍālī, Susukhī, Mātaṅginī, Māheśvarī, Rājamātaṅginī, Laghuvārāhī, Sutiraskāriṇī, Svapnavārāhī, Pādukā, Vārāhīpādukā, Jambukikkikā, Śukā, Vāgeśī, Śukatuṇḍā, Mohinī, Kirādinī (i.e. Kirātinī), Kṣemaṅkarī, Sumūrti, Śrī-mahātimiravatī, Kālamāyā, oḍaśī, Śrī-parāvidyā, Caraṇarūpiṇī, Śrīvidyā, Bālatripurā, Vagalā, Mahiṣaghnā, Mahālakṣmi, Mahāsarasvatī, Pratyaṅgirā, Bhavānī, Kālikā, Tārā, Chinnamastā, Dhūmāvatī, etc.

The *Sammoha Tantra* therefore presents a state of things far different from that of the Śiva Tantras of the Āgamic period. It shows that the Tantras had assumed a complete Śāktic character, assimilated a very large number of cults of various origins, regional, tribal, and sectarian, and thus established a well-developed and complicated pantheon of goddesses (all representing

various aspects of Śakti). This state of things must have been attained by the fourteenth century, when the *Sammoha Tantra* seems to have assumed its final form. Later Tantras, either original or compiled, add to the number of *vidyās*, *mantras*, and *maṇḍalas.* Many of the old cults are either forgotten or dropped as obsolete.

THE KAULA SCHOOLS AND OTHER VAIṢṆAVA SECTS

The *Sammoha Tantra*, we have seen, mentions three classes of Tantras or rather Tāntric *sādhanās*: *divya*, *kaula*, and *vāma*. We know something definite about the origin of the Kaula classes. According to a very old text, *Kaulajñānanirṇaya*, the manuscript of which goes back to the eleventh century, the Kaula class of Tantras was introduced by Matsyendra Nātha. But, strictly speaking, he was the founder of one of the Kaula schools called Yoginī-kaula of Kāmarūpa. A number of other Kaula schools are also mentioned in the text: Vṛṣaṇottha-kaula, Vahni-kaula, Kaulasadbhāva, Padottiṣṭha-kaula, Mahā-kaula, Siddha-kaula, Jñānanirṇiti-kaula, Siddhāmṛta-kaula, Sṛṣṭi-kaula, Chandra-kaula, Śaktibheda-kaula, Urmi-kula, and Jñāna-kaula. It is difficult at present to determine the nature of these sects but it is clear that in the eleventh century the Kaula schools were quite developed, comprising a number of sects. *Kula* stands for Śakti, and so the Kaula schools were Śāktic in character.

The Yoginī-kaula of Matsyendra Nātha had a syncretic character. The doctrines of this school, as may be gathered from *Kaulajñānanirṇaya*,[24] have something in common with the Buddhist Tantras of the Sahaja class. Matsyendra, we know, is honoured by the Buddhist mystics as the first of the Siddhas under the name Lui-pāda. The fundamental doctrine of the Buddhist Sahaja school is the doctrine of Sahaja: 'The ideal state of the *yogin*, a state in which the mind enters the vacuity, becomes free from duality, and rejects the illusory character of the world.' The Yoginī-kaula also advocates the doctrine of Sahaja. It defines Sahaja almost in the terms of the Buddhist mystics as 'a state in which the mind attains immobility, becomes free from duality and illusion'. The Yoginī-kaula agrees with Buddhist Sahajiyā

[24] P. C. Bagchi, *Kaulajñānanirṇaya and Minor Texts of the School of Matsyendra Nātha*, Introduction, p. 33.

in many other respects too; it disregards the traditional lore, discredits the outward purificatory rites, and denounces the attempt to attain salvation by the study of the Śāstras and by exoteric practices, such as sacrifices, fasting, bathing, visiting holy places, etc.

This syncretism, which began before the eleventh century, was responsible for the growth of two important esoteric sects during the succeeding centuries. They were the Nātha sect, which had a tinge of Śaivism, and the Sahajiyā, which had a tinge of Vaiṣṇavism.

The Nātha sect originated from the teachings of the Siddhācāryas, as its reputed founder Matsyendra Nātha was in all likelihood the same as the first Siddha Lui-pāda. The great teachers of this mystic sect were all called Nāthas, and the most famous among them were Mīna Nātha, Gorakṣa Nātha, and Cauraṅgī Nātha. Their teachings had a great influence in Bengal, and miraculous tales about them became the subject of popular songs in Bengali. The followers of Nāthism at first formed a monastic group, but later on constituted a caste in Hindu society.

The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā as a distinct sect was established in Bengal before the time of Caitanya.[25] The oldest reference to Sahajiyā is in an inscription of the thirteenth century (the Maināmatī plate). It speaks of the practice of Sahajadharma in Paṭṭikeraka in Tippera. Caṇḍīdāsa was the earliest Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā, and lived, most probably, in the fourteenth century. In his songs, which have come down in a very much altered form, and in his *Śrī-Kṛṣṇa-kīrtana* we can trace some of the fundamental doctrines of the sect. Rādhā is the Śakti and Kṛṣṇa the supreme Reality. The Haṭha-yoga is the only *yoga* approved of by the sect. Every *sādhaka* has to make full use of his psychic energy in bringing about the union of the two principles. The various *nāḍīs* and *cakras* within the body are recognized. The topmost station within the body is the thousand-petalled lotus. The terminology used in these cases is borrowed from the Buddhist Sahajayāna and the Hindu Tantras. The Buddhist Sahaja texts speak of five kinds of psychic energy (*kula*): *ḍombī*, *naṭī*, *rajakī*, *caṇḍālī*, and *brāhmaṇī*. In the case of Caṇḍīdāsa it is *rajakī*. The names

[25] P. C. Bagchi, 'Religion of Bengal' in *History of Bengal*, I. p. 421.

of the *nāḍīs* and the *cakras* are taken sometimes from the same source, but in other cases also from the Hindu Tantras.

Two other mystic sects seem to have originated in this period: they are the sects of the Avadhūta and the Bāul. The Avadhūta sect has great affinities with the Nātha sect, whereas the Bāul derives inspiration from the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiā.

FOREIGN INFLUENCE ON THE TANTRAS

A few words should be said about the alleged foreign influence on the Tantras.[26] Mysticism by its very nature transcends sectarianism and regionalism in the highest stages of its development. Mystics of various countries thus easily discover the common elements in their respective modes of *sādhanā*. They also borrow from each other techniques of a complementary nature, which might help them in enriching their own religious experiences. This must have happened in every age. The historians of Alexander the Great spoke of the existence of a class of mystics called Gymnosophists in all countries from Egypt to India. Indian mystics were found in Alexandria as late as the fourth century A.D., and they are said to have been in close contact with their fellow-mystics in the Christian world.

The *Sammoha Tantra*, to which we have already referred, speaks of the Tāntric culture of foreign countries like Bāhlīka, Kirāta, Bhoṭa, Cīna, Mahācīna, Pārasika, Airāka, Kamboja, Hūṇa, Yavana, Gandhāra, and Nepāla. This does not mean that the Indian Tantras were prevalent in all these countries, though we know they were prevalent in some of them. It means, if anything at all, that these foreign countries also possessed modes of esoteric culture, and that some of them were known in India and recognized as being similar to the Indian Tantras.

It is therefore very difficult to find out the borrowed elements, if any, in the Tantras. They are so well fitted into the system that they have lost their, exotic character. Yet some stray references may be discovered in the Tantras to the borrowing of foreign modes of *sādhanā*. A particular mode of Tāntric *sādhanā* called Cīnācāra is found in the Tantras. The *Tārā Tantra*, adopted both by Hinduism and Buddhism, says that the cult of Cīnācāra came from Mahācīna. A well-known Brāhmaṇa

[26] P. C. Bagchi, *Studies in the Tantras*, pp. 45 ff.

sage, Vasiṣṭha, is said to have gone to the country of Mahācīna to learn this mode of *sādhanā* from Buddha. It was not to be found either in India or in Tibet. So Vasiṣṭha had to go to Mahācīna, where he was initiated by Buddha into the secret doctrines of Cīnācāra. He subsequently came back to India and propagated them. Some scholars were inclined to discover in this Cīnācāra a distant echo of the secret societies of China. It is the cult of Mahācīna-Tārā which is introduced by the Cīnācāra.

Mahācīna-Tārā, as can be ascertained from the Buddhist *sādhanās*, was the same goddess as Ekajaṭā whose cult is said to have been discovered by Siddha Nāgārjuna in Tibet (*Ārya-Nāgārjunapādaiḥ Bhoṭeṣu uddhṛtam*). The description of Ekajaṭā is found in six different Buddhist *sādhanās*. It closely agrees with that of Mahācīna-Tārā, as found in some of the *sādhanās*. A comparison of the two goddesses shows that they are essentially identical, the only difference being found in the *bīja-mantra* which, in the case of Mahācīna-Tārā, is composed of three letters and, in the case of Ekajaṭā, is sometimes composed of four, sometimes of five. Corresponding to these goddesses, we find in the Hindu pantheon Tārā, Ugra-Tārā, Ekajaṭā, and Mahā-Nīla-Sarasvatī. The *dhyānas* of these goddesses, as found in the Hindu Tantras, literally correspond to those found in the Buddhist *sādhanā*. According to a legend recorded in the *Sammoha Tantra*, Nīla-Sarasvatī or Ugra-Tārā was born in a lake called Cola, on the western side of Mount Meru. This name Cola is probably to be connected with *kul, kol*, the common word for lake to the west and north of the T'ien-shan in the pure Mongolian zone. Besides, in the enumeration of the various female energies (Yoginī) in the Brāhmanical Tantras, we find a type called Lāmā (Rūpikā Cumbikā Lāmā). The corresponding god is called Lāmeśvara. The word Lāmā, like a few others, such as Ḍākinī, Śākinī, Lākinī, and Hākinī, in spite of their later explanations, seems to be exotic. Lāmā is certainly the Tibetan word 'Lha-mo', which means Devī (Śakti).

These evidences show that a number of foreign elements were introduced in the Tantras, most probably, between the eighth and the twelfth century, when communication with Tibet, China, and Mongolia became brisk. But these cults lost their exotic character, as they fitted well, in logical sequence, into a completely integrated system. In the same way, the practices

of the Buddhist Siddhācāryas, and those of the early Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, seem to have received certain influences from Taoism, but at present, it is difficult to determine to what extent this borrowing was made. A thorough study of the Buddhist Sahajiyā and Taoist literature can alone solve the problem.

III

PHILOSOPHY OF THE TANTRAS

Swami Pratyagatmananda

Like the word Veda, Tantra is often used in the singular, which may suggest that there is a uniform formulation of doctrine and discipline covered by the term. But there exists no such formal uniformity as one may expect from the singular use. Tantras are profusely varied in their theme and in their expression, but they claim (and this is a point of uniformity) to have emanated from a divine source, and, as such, they call themselves by such names as Āgama, Nigama, etc. Leaving apart those that are avowedly of a Buddhistic character and also those that have a veiled affiliation to the tenets of Buddhism, the Tantras that have allied themselves to Vedic metaphysics and theology, if not to some extent also to Vedic practices, are of a varied nature and have divided themselves into diverse, and sometimes apparently divergent cults, paths, and rituals. The Tantras, being pre-eminently ways of practical realization, have necessarily to bear reference to the diverse characters and competencies of different aspirants and seekers, and have, accordingly, designed the framework of their theory and practice suitably to actual conditions prevailing, and also evolving stages and states in the soul's journey towards its chosen ends and values.

But what are to be the ends and values of its choice? The highest and the best, of course. The seeker soul cannot give up its quest till it realizes *all* that it is potentially; in other words, till it realizes, in all the dimensions of its meaning and fulfilment, its own undiminished perfectness. This highest end has been called by a special name in the Tantra Śāstra—*pūrṇatākhyāti* (e.g. in *Paraśurāma Kalpa-Sūtra*). Commonly, however, the highest end is called *mokṣa* or liberation from bondage. If, for example, the highest Reality, as eternally realized perfectness, is Śiva, the Jīva or the individual is potentially Śiva; but he does not actually know and realize himself as That. How can

you (or thou) equate yourself to That? Only by liquidating your 'bonds' or limitations.

This is realization. Then, 'Thou art That', 'Jīva is Śiva'. The limitations are mainly of two kinds: those that limit or detract from the pristine purity of the individual self (*mala*), and those that limit or restrict the sense as well as the degree of its freedom (*pāśa*). On a more comprehensive scale, the limitations are counted as five; and they are called the five *kañcukas* (contracting and restricting factors). These five, as we shall see, have their place and function in the descent of the universe from its ultimate perfect source, and have therefore got to be resolved and not simply 'by-passed' when ascent is sought from cosmic limitations to the purity, freedom, and perfection of the ultimate source. In other words, if realization is to mean the equating of thou to That, it cannot be effected except by reducing the factors that apparently make a 'little knower, little doer, little enjoyer, etc.' of the first term (thou) and thereby create all the world of difference between itself and the second term (That). So long as those limiting factors are permitted to operate and create a stupendous bar, what am I but a tiny drop of dew on a shaky blade of grass? The vast sublime choir of the starry heavens above and the 'still small voice' of moral consciousness within dealing in categorical imperatives, are the two things that set the great philosopher Kant furiously thinking, 'Have they or have they not a common source or origin?' The mighty master voice that leads that sublime heavenly chorus and the small masterful voice that speaks through moral injunctions; the mighty master ordaining the measure of cosmic harmonies and the little master regulating the inner springs of action in us—can 'That' and 'this' be equated to each other? This raises the eternal issue. The little mystery that dwells within and rules as the hidden *in*—can it be assimilated to the majesty and sublimity that rules as the displayed *out*? Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, as we all know, locked the front door, keeping only the back door ajar. One knocked but had no reassuring answer. But is there really to be no positive solution?

The issue primarily relates to the individual, but is not confined to him. The individual does not stand and function alone, abstractedly and cross-sectionally. His life is functionally integrated into a broader and ampler scheme of life, which enlarges

itself into groups, classes, and societies, which, in their turn, are 'partials' of a grand cosmic scheme. His life cannot be the life in a 'frog hole' or even in the cloistered seclusion of the 'cave'. It must be a self-conscious and self-fulfilling component as well as exponent of the unmeasured immensity which is life divine. He cannot therefore pursue his ends and work out his values irrespective of the entire scheme into which he is integrated. In other words, his own realization—or as we have put it, the solving of his own basic equation of thou and That—cannot be effected by methods of simple negation, ignorance, and escape. The problem, the equation, must be solved upon the most complete and thorough appraisement of all the relevant factors and conditions, individual and extra-individual.

SYNTHETIC APPROACH

Now, the great significance of the Tāntric approach, both as regards philosophy and discipline, lies in this that it sets the problem with the full burden of all the relevant terms involved; the conditions limiting the individual could not be assigned and assailed as though these pertained to him alone abstractedly and cross-sectionally; and therefore his own perfection could not be attained irrespective of whether the cosmic scheme and the cosmic process were his allies or were hostile to him or simply neutral.

But what should this mean and imply? Should it mean that the individual would not attain his perfection unless and until the whole cosmic scheme and process also attained perfection; that there is no place for individual perfection in a universe which, for example, may actually be 'running down' for aught we know? The physicists, at any rate some of them, are telling us that the universe is 'running down' physically; but are we on the other hand assured that the universe is 'looking up' spiritually? Supposing that it is spiritually advancing and even 'turning the corner', is the individual's own advance so scheduled as to move *pari passu* with the total advance? That there must be a continued vital exchange of personal effort and 'outside' assistance between the two cannot be denied. Redeeming forces of sufficient magnitude and adequate influence must descend as operative 'high level' aids. And forms of Tāntric discipline recog-

nize and keep themselves alive to these supra-physical and supramental forces. The world can never be so bad, materially and spiritually, as to make those forces unavailable for the earnest seeker's reforming and transforming effort.

It is here that the philosophy and practice of the Tantra deliver their special meaning and message to a world sunk low in material and spiritual confusion. Independent, if not alien, objectivity of the universe is a theory and will perhaps ever remain a theory; but that each conscious centre, every appreciative individual, 'lives, moves, and has his being' in a universe of his own selection and acceptance is an indisputable fact. To him therefore the theoretical objectivity of an alien universe is of much less practical account than the fact that he has his own universe to live and function in. We may call this latter the universe of appreciation and acceptance. This implies that this universe grows in stature and brightens, or else, shrinks and darkens, in accordance with the individual centre's appreciative and reactive ratio, which, of course, varies in the same individual as also from case to case. The ratio means that not only is man what nature has made of him, but that nature is what man has made of her. The best or worst possible world is man's own world as determined by that ratio, so that by transforming his own appreciative angle and reactive momentum he can transform that world suitably to his highest ideals and noblest ends.

His own realization must therefore necessarily imply and require this transforming also in all dimensions. His realization, as we have said, requires the solution of a basic equation, thou = That. The equation would admit of no solution till that brute, blind factor entering into the constitution both of the individual and of nature could be reduced—reduced not by simple negation and elimination, for it could create only an untenable vacuum, but by transforming the *paśu* in us into Paśupati, Jīva into Śiva. Then what are bonds or limitations from the appreciative angle of the first must appear as forms of creative joy and fulfilment, when that appreciative angle is raised and that reactive index transformed into a vision and understanding and ecstatic enjoyment of the whole basic theme of creation. In other words, the whole creation must be realized as Śiva. The equation thou

= That cannot be finally and perfectly solved unless it is realized that all is That, all is Śiva.

SIX COROLLARIES FROM THE GENERAL POSITION

The corollaries that follow from this general position are: First, there is undoubtedly enough evil, physical and moral, in the universe of our appreciation and acceptance. We could not create, even if we would, a vacuum by simply negating it or equating it to some sort of transcendental nothing. Speculatively, it is just possible that in the balanced economy of the universe there may be an equal subtraction corresponding to any addition made anywhere, so that all the positive and negative terms added up yield a resultant zero. But how is this to be practically realized as the total reduction of evil in one's own life? Hence the compelling reason, the driving power (*śakti*) appearing as evil must be sublimated and transformed.

Secondly, Jīva has to work out his salvation, not simply by negating his limitations and his evil, but by so working them up that they become his allies, his helpers, and ultimately, his liberators. This is the principle: Man must rise with the aid of that *śakti* which made him fall. Or, as *Śāktānanda-taraṅgiṇī* puts it, 'The poison which kills becomes the elixir of life when suitably treated and tested by the wise physician'.

Thirdly, his own body and mind, and his whole environment, must be appreciated as and worked up into spiritual community and ultimate identity with his own inner imperishable Self (Ātman). The body, for example, must not be looked upon as 'flesh' only and therefore essentially alien and intransigent and sinful. Look upon it as an epiphany of the divine Consort (Śiva-Śakti), Her own vehicle for manifestation whether in play or in purpose; and therefore use that vehicle for the purpose of realizing your identity with Divinity. Make it Her temple, fill every fibre of it with Her divine presence. Then what was toiling purpose in the effort will be play in divine ecstasy (*ullāsa*) in the achievement. So treat and transform all the functions, including those that are commonly looked upon as 'carnal'. There is, essentially, nothing 'carnal' in what is, in reality, the 'incarnation' of Śiva-Śakti. The same sublimating attitude and enlarging 'ratio' must work up and exalt our psychical being and our environment.

Fourthly, neither the body and the mind nor the environment

can be taken at their face value and worked as they are in ordinary usage. Their latent magazine of power (*kuṇḍalinī-śakti*) must be opened up and made available. If the body and the mind and everything be Śiva-Śakti incarnate, nothing in the universe can be a mere nothing or trifle. Microcosmically, as well as macrocosmically, all must be Śiva-Śakti. Science has found the magazine in the atom of matter. But has it not so far touched only the fringe, the 'outer rings'? Material mass is energy: this is now recognized. But the real and the whole thing is not what appears as material mass, so that the energy-equivalent of material mass is only 'crustal energy' or nature's stabilizing forces which maintain material things at their present creation level. When the foundational power (Śakti) has descended to the present material level, it applies the 'brake', so to say, and the creative momentum is in part arrested; and it is the brake or arresting part of the momentum which is represented by material mass and energy. But the part arrested and 'interned' is not represented by it. That is the inside power and pattern of what we appreciate as matter. A unit of matter therefore must possess an intrinsic economy of higher and higher, deeper and deeper energy levels, till the core is reached where resides *mahāmāyā* (Śiva-Śakti) as *mahā-kuṇḍalinī* (the great coiled power). The hooded serpent girdling Śiva's matted locks has now been roused; but every dynamic path must essay to lead the divine flow inside Śiva's matted locks deeper and deeper to the inmost core.

Fifthly, the ascent of the seeker (*sādhaka*) must be carried up to the 'mystery bridge' (*setu*) in order that it may first be co-ordinated and then integrated with the flow of divine descent. The 'bridge' is a necessary factor in the progress: it not merely connects *this* with *that*, it converts lower-level energy into higher and consummates it.

Sixthly, the ascent must be made in the order of creative descent, but with its sign reversed. The Tantras speak of the six paths or steps (*ṣaḍadhvā*). Physically as well as metaphysically creative descent must start from a condition of immensely 'massed' probability-wave function which we may more simply express as unbounded potency to be and to become all. It is power regarded as unbounded *plenum* and *continuum*. What physics now appreciates as space-time-continuum is a 'descended' phase or specification of the basic continuum of power which is called *nāda*.

The next state must be an infinite intentness or readiness of that power to evolve and create. This is power as continuum 'condensing' itself into dynamic point or centre or nucleus. This condensation, however, is not a process in space or in time, so that the power continuum is not contracted and reduced in magnitude and dimensions and does not suffer either in sense or in tense value when it is the dynamic point. It is a primordial causal transformation not renderable in terms in which causation is apt to be expressed in our planes. Hence, paradoxically, the dynamic point is the perfect potential universe. This is *bindu.* Words in common parlance can never express the basic idea or pattern (*hṛllekhā*). An aspect of the basic pattern is sought to be expressed in Tantra by the mystic syllable or formula *hrīm* (*māyābīja*).

COSMIC DESCENT

Do not physics and biology and psychology illustrate the principle of polarity (*mithuna*) in ultimate as well as derivative forms? There is no need to wonder that they do, because the whole creative process starts as and from polarity. We have just referred to Śakti as *nāda* and Śakti as *bindu.* Each is partless, aspectless, though the entire process of cosmic 'partition' and 'aspectualization' must have its possibility grounded in the one and 'worked up and out' by the other. One is the 'soil', and the other the 'seed' for all cosmic generation and fruition. One is the extensive or expansive whole of power; the other is the intensive or concentrated whole of power.

The relation of *nāda-bindu* is, undoubtedly, one of the hardest hurdles to negotiate in the way of understanding Tāntric principles. From *bindu* descends, next in order, the polarity of *kalā* and *varṇa.* The former term, as also many others, bears an elastic and flexible meaning in the Tantras and Vedas, as terms or symbols meant primarily for practical or 'experimental' use should. We are not here dealing with a speculative philosophy set in a rigid mould of logical terms. The term *kalā*, in the last analysis, must mean that aspect of Reality (Śiva) by which it manifests as power (Śakti) for evolving universes and involving them again. It is the *prakṛti* or 'nature' of Reality so to manifest itself. Hence Śiva in Śaiva-Śākta Āgama is both transcendent (*niṣkala*) and emergent and immanent (*sakala*). It is thus clear that *kalā*, in this ultimate sense, must logically precede all

'descending movements' of Reality. But here, coming after *nāda-bindu*, it means 'partial'. That is to say, when we come to this point, the whole, the entire, veils or covers up its wholeness, as it were, and manifests as partials, as predicables. It is the starting point of differentiation. It is here that time, space, thing, attribute, etc. are differentiated from an 'alogical' integrated whole (*nāda-bindu*). *Kalā*, in the basic sense of nature-aspect, is already implicit in *nāda-bindu*, but as partial it comes after. There is no derogation from dynamic wholeness and perfectness in *nāda* or in *bindu*; but in *kalā*, as here derived, all gradation and gradualness (all ascending and descending series in the cosmic process) have their possibility of appearance. This possibility can be viewed in two ways—as object and as index or 'sense'. An object itself and the sense (sign or index of the object)—this is how the polarity principle appears when we come to partials.

But this does not mean that we have been already landed in the 'concrete' (*sthūla*) universe of our own acceptance. That is yet a far cry. In *kalā* and *varṇa* we are still in a 'prototypal' region (*para* it may be called). *Varṇa*, here, does not yet mean 'letter' or 'colour' or even 'class', but only the 'sense' or the 'function form' (natural *spanda* we may call it) of the primordial object projected from 'perfect activity' (*bindu*). *Varṇa* would mean therefore the characteristic measure-index (number, magnitude, etc. as rendered by us) of the function form associated with the object. Lower down, this may appear as 'chromosome number', 'probability function', 'atomic number', etc. In this primordial sense, *varṇa* sets and rules the order and harmony in creation.

Then, in the subtle (*sūkṣma*) or vital plane, this polarity manifests as *tattva* and *mantra*. The primordial object with its conceptual or mathematical function form is not yet a 'picturable' thing, not yet a localizable entity that can be 'rounded up' and seized upon as this, and not that, rendering a sufficiently categorical account of itself for the purpose of definition and usage.

The concept of *kalā* and *varṇa* as logically prior to and transcending the concept of *tattva* and *mantra*, is no doubt, a particularly hard nut to crack; but it is noteworthy that new physics too in her newest theoretical ventures has found herself confronted with an analogous conceptual impasse. She has been able to 'crack' the hard atom, but her conception of 'wave packet'

electron and of the wave itself as being a wave of probability, and many a vital postulate and conclusion incidental to her present theoretical position, have certainly rendered her 'physical' entity, mathematically quite reasonable and consistent though it be, very nearly a conceptual impossibility. But does it mean that it is in reality a non-entity, not a fact in nature but a mathematical fiction? No. It means only that there is reality transcending our conceptual limits, that there are facts beyond our perceptual frontiers. As we work up from our own level to the realm of reals, we are bound to cross frontiers one after another; and as we do so, we come across postures and measures of the real which strike us not merely as novel, but as astounding and baffling.

Shall we, then, be surprised to know that what was to our understanding only 'cosmic dust' or 'cloud' in the higher stage, 'gathers' itself into things of definite shape and function when we descend to the stage next below? (*Kalā*, as we have seen, is cosmic 'partial' that has not yet parted itself from the cosmic whole, and *varṇa* 'element' or 'elemental' (*varṇa*=*mātṛkā*= matrix) of cosmic function that has not yet differentiated itself from the cosmic 'integral'. They are therefore *terms* and *conditions* in a general cosmic equation which has not yet solved itself understandably. They are there, but we cannot as yet definitely assign distinctive sets of value, that is, we do not yet know the characteristic of each, its own appropriate formula. When we do, we come to the realm of *tattva* and *mantra*. The term *tattva*, like *kalā*, is used in an elastic sense; but here it means a 'thing-in-itself' as this or that, and possesses therefore its own distinguishing characteristic. It is the thing or event regarded as inherent principle, the radix of relations, as distinguished from reactions due to varying incidents or accidents of cosmic exchange. Associated with it is there its own appropriate function form, its own basic formula, its 'natural name' (*mantra*). Now, the general cosmic equation has displayed to us the underlying principles—the characteristics of its terms and the shapes of its conditions. We are, however, still in the realm of dynamic (*śaktirūpa*) being and becoming. The universe of appearance, the universe of our acceptance and convention, the *chāyārūpa* (as *Śrī Caṇḍī* puts it), is not yet. With the emergence of this, we have the third and last polarity—*bhuvana* and *pada*. *Bhuvana*

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is the universe as it appears to apprehending and appreciating 'centres', such as we are, and, accordingly, it greatly varies. It is governed by reactive ratio. *Pada* (*padyate anena iti*) is the actual formulation (first by mind reaction and then by speech) of that universe in accordance with the ratio that subsists relevant to a given 'centre'.

SPIRITUAL ASCENT

At this level the cosmic descent apparently stops. And as it stops it stabilizes its incalculably great, gathered momentum. So that incalculably great power is latent, 'coiled up', in the tiniest thing of creation, not to say of the self-conscious Jīva. What was in 'That' is really in 'this' also, that is, the whole undiminished glory of cosmic life and consciousness, joy and harmony. This is what is meant by *citi* or *cit-śakti* pervading (*vyāpya*) all creation. She has 'involved' Herself in this plane of *bhuvana* and *pada*. A 'centre' living and functioning in that plane must essay to 'evolve' to perfection what has been thus involved. By completing its evolution it can work out the realization of its inherent perfectness or divinity. For this, it must be able to reverse the gear of the whole working apparatus, individual as well as environmental. In other words, ascent must be made from the reactive plane of sense experience and expression (*bhuvana* and *pada*) to the dynamic realm of inherent principles (*tattva*) and natural 'function forms' (*mantras*, *yantras*, and *tantras*); and from these to the highest level of cosmic partials and *mātṛkās* (*kalā* and *varṇa*) which together weave a grand, seamless pattern of cosmic harmony. This is the positive or upward evolving sense of the *ṣaḍadhvā* as distinguished from the negative, downward involving sense. It has been said that one who knows *ṣaḍadhvā* knows all in Tantra.

From 'partials' and *mātṛkās* one must press forward into the unspeakable mystery beyond—the mystery of *bindu* and *nāda*. Here is the wonder of the partless and measureless in the travail of giving birth to the still united 'twin'—partial and measure. It is the *setu* or link connecting supreme experience in which magnitude (*pāda*) and measure (*mātrā*) are 'absorbed', with another posture of that experience in which they 'recognize' each other, though as yet held in each other's close embrace, so to say. Tantra, Upaniṣad, in fact all types of mystic experience,

thus speak in symbols and parables: there is no help. Trace the curve of any vital concept (e.g. *guru* = spiritual guide) from below upwards till the apex is reached: (1) *guru* as embodied, physically and mentally, and his prayer and worship; (2) *guru* as *tattva* or principle, and his *bīja mantra*; (3) *guru* as the *kalā* (aspect) of Śiva as liberator, and as Śakti operative as *varṇa* (*mātṛkā*); (4) *guru* as combined *nāda-bindu* ; and (5) *guru* as *nāda-bindu-kalātīta* (transcending the three), and therefore the Absolute. The *sādhaka's* own self is to be ultimately equated to That.

SUPREME EXPERIENCE

So we have somehow a dual aspect of the supreme experience —Parama Śiva—*niṣkala* and *sakala*, as they have been called. The former is experience or consciousness beyond *nāda-bindu-kalā* (the primary *trika* or triad) and all their derivatives as shewn in the 'six steps' (*ṣaḍadhvā*). The latter is Śiva as His own divine nature (Paramā Prakṛti or Parā Śakti) to be and become all. In Śrīvidyā (the type of Tāntrika doctrine on which we are especially working here for the sake of brevity), the supreme consciousness is often called Tripurā, which term literally means what is prior to (*purā*) or beyond the three. Even the word Caṇḍikā has been taken to mean (e.g. in *Bhuvaneśvarī Saṁhitā*) the Akṣara Brahman Itself of the Upaniṣads (the Reality that never recoils or relents), the fear of whom keeps Time itself flowing for ever, the Sun and Fire, Indra, the chief of the gods, and Death going their appointed rounds, and so on. Tripurā and Caṇḍikā, in this ultimate sense, must therefore be Śiva's own divine nature (*prakṛti*) to be and become all.

Śiva associated with His own nature, which is perfect, is Godhead (Parameśvara). As such there is fivefold expression of His perfectness—absoluteness (*svatantratā*), eternality of being (*nityatā*), eternal self-satisfaction (*nitya-tṛptatā*), supreme sovereignty and omnipotence (*sarva-kartṛtā*), and omniscience (*sarva-jñatā*). As and when that divine nature is *involved* in creative descent, Her own perfectness is 'veiled' or limited, and this gives rise to the five 'contracting factors' (*kañcukas*) corresponding to the five 'perfections'. They are respectively called *niyati* (determining or binding factor), *kāla* (the 'tense' factor), *rāga* (desire or appetite factor), *kalā* (power delegated and 'parcelled out',

so to speak, the devolving factor), and *avidyā* (the 'ignoring' or veiling factors).

THIRTY-SIX PRINCIPLES OF ŚAIVA ĀGAMA

Śaiva Āgama traces the devolution of the ultimate Reality (which is Śiva = Śakti = Śiva's own nature) through thirty-six forms or principles (*tattvas*) as they have been called. We have dwelt at some length on the 'six step' scheme (*ṣaḍadhvā*), but this one is more elaborate and more common. Working from down upwards we meet the familiar twenty-four *tattvas* of the Sāṁkhya, reaching the 'peak' in Prakṛti (which is the equilibrium plane of the three cosmic factors of presentation, movement, and veiling); below this plane we meet, of course, three 'stages' in which the three factors, never in dissociation though they may be, respectively prevail—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, yielding the three 'inner instruments' of *buddhi* (understanding), *ahaṅkāra* (apperception or self-reference), and *manas* (apprehending and desiring). Beyond Prakṛti is Puruṣa as individual soul (Jīvātman), also sometimes called *citta*, appreciating and reacting to the 'pulsations' of Prakṛti. The individual is subject to the five 'restricting factors' we have mentioned above. He is thus *apūrṇa* (imperfect). These five factors are therefore above him. And he must work up so as to outgrow them. Next in order comes *Māyā* which not only 'measures out' all that is held by and within her, but is primarily responsible for the non-realization of the fact that the creation (*jagat*) is in reality Śiva-Śakti. She makes the world appear as other than Brahman. All knowledge, all perception within the net of Māyā is therefore impure (*aśuddha*), and in that sense, unreal. Above and beyond Māyā is *Śuddha-vidyā* (the realm of pure knowledge and principles). In this, and at the base of this, is Īśvara, the Lord of creation, who 'appreciates' and ordains all as 'this' (*idam*). Here we reach the root of any act or process of 'objectification' and of egression. The same *Īśvara-tattva* regarding all as 'I' (not to be confounded with the 'inner instrument' of *ahaṅkāra* we met before) is the root and pre-condition of any act or process of 'subjectification' and of ingression. As such, He is *sadāśiva-tattva*. Next comes Śakti which combines the two roots of *idam* and *aham* and contains in Herself all that may 'shoot out' and evolve. She is Śiva's own desire (*kāma*) to be and become. *Śakti-tattva* is what projects,

subjectively as well as objectively, everything as *nāda*, *bindu*, and *kalā*, and again absorbs all into Her. Śakti as identified with Śiva is the first and final Principle. It is Parama Śiva as Absolute.

ŚAKTI AND TĀNTRIKA REALISM

The precise nature of the identity of Śiva-Śakti has been a matter of considerable metaphysical discussion. Bhāskararāya, Rāmeśvara, Lakṣmīdhara, and other writers and commentators have stoutly defended the non-duality of Śiva and Śakti vis-a-vis the Māyāvāda position as regards Brahman and Its Māyā. Śakti is distinguishable from Śiva only in theoretical and conventional analysis, but in realization She is identical with Śiva. Hence, if Śiva is *sat* (Being in itself), Śakti is *satī* (Being in itself as power to be such); if Śiva is *cit* (pure and perfect Consciousness), Śakti is *citī* (Consciousness as power); and if Śiva is *ānanda* (perfect Bliss), Śakti is *paramānanda-sandoha-rūpā* and *paramānanda-laharī* (the very soul of *ānanda* and its 'wave' of absolute play). If Śiva is Brahman, She is Brahmamayī. Should this relation be called *advaita* (non-duality) or not? We can only repeat what the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* says on this: 'Some say it is *advaita*, others *dvaita;* but in reality it is *dvaitādvaita-vivarjita*—neither the one nor the other'. It is beyond the reach of measure and nothing numerical can pertain to it.

As to the 'illusoriness' of the world appearance, the position is that the question does not arise on the principles as enunciated above. Even the 'appearance' (*chāyā*) is She and none other, and it is only by a dispensable convention, a certain form of definition and notation only, that one can maintain a dialectical hiatus or opposition between the world and reality. In reality the world is Śiva-Śakti, and it is wrong to think that the one is not the other. The object of realization in Śakta Tantra is to prove that the relation is first an equation and that the equation is ultimately an identity; the proving is not by 'purging' and 'emptying' one or the other relevant term, but by a method of perfecting, and realizing one into the integrated whole of the other. *Niṣkala* or pure Consciousness is the changeless background, and the changing world is Its own show by Itself as Śakti to Itself as Śakti.

This prepares the ground for the pre-eminently practical and essentially realistic and synthetic approach of Tantra. Action,

devotion, and knowledge—all these must be harnessed into the service of the supreme object the *sādhaka* has in view. And the paths must be varied suitably to varying steps and stages of competence and temperament. Not only the paths, but even to some extent the principles are varied also, but always keeping within the basic framework necessary for working out complete realization. The path, Śaiva, Śākta, Vaiṣṇava, or whatever else it be, if followed with faith and courage, devotion and vision, will itself lead the way to the clarification of the principles and their harmonic integration. It will show how the divergent paths all meet at last, how the varying principles approach and blend into a final synthesis. And the appeal of the Tantras is not for the individual only: it is an all-dimensional comprehensive appeal for all seekers' societies toiling into the higher realms of power, light, and perfection.

IV

THE SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF INDIA : THE TANTRAS

Govinda Gopal Mukherjee

I

THE Vedas are considered to be the primal fount of all spiritual knowledge in India. The Vedas are primarily three and are therefore called *trayī*, to which is added or incorporated the *Atharvāṅgirasa*, which is looked upon by many as the precursor of the Tantras because of its magical elements and widespread popularity for serving the pressing needs of our everyday life. Western scholars have found in the *trayī* an enunciation of what they call 'priestly religion' and in the *Atharva-Veda* a delineation of 'popular religion'. What is popular is naturally widespread and the name Tantra might have originally signified a kind of teaching or knowledge that was spread (*tanyate vistāryate jñānam anena*, i.e. by which knowledge is spread or developed) far and wide among the people in opposition to or in sharp contrast with that body of knowledge which was confined only among the priests or higher castes or the privileged classes. Many look upon the Tantras as a revolt against the Vedas and some consider them to be even anterior to the Vedas, embodying the primary teachings of the pre-Aryan civilization, though the literature known by this name does not appear to be very ancient from the point of view of language and style or diction.

The term '*Tantra*' has a wide connotation. Originally it signified any *śāstra* or text relating to a particular system. We hear about the *Ṣaṣṭi-tantra* (a text of sixty verses) in connexion with the Sāṁkhya philosophy and *Aṣṭāṅga-tantra* (a text containing eight parts) with reference to Āyurveda. Later it came to signify a particular body of religious texts belonging to the different theistic systems such as Śaiva, Śākta, and Vaiṣṇava. From this point of view the term '*Tantra*' is explained by splitting its two supposed components, '*tan*' and '*tra*', as that which elaborates something of great import connected with *mantras* and

tattvas which in its turn leads to emancipation or salvation. A verse in the *Kāmikāgama* defines Tantra from this point of view thus: *Tanoti vipulān arthān tattva-mantra-samanvitān; /Trāṇaṁ ca kurute yasmāt tantramity'abhidhīyate.*

This Tantra literature is vast and extensive. It is said that at the beginning of creation the supreme Lord revealed pure knowledge in five streams in order to serve the twofold needs of the created beings (Jīvas), viz. *bhoga* and *apavarga*, *bhukti* as well as *mukti*, i.e. worldly enjoyment and emancipation. From supreme Śiva pure awareness first revealed itself as *nāda* and later on from Sadāśiva it took the form of *tantra* and *śāstra*. From each of the five faces of this Sadāśiva came out five streams, viz. *laukika*, *vaidika*, *ādhyātmika*, *atimārga*, and *mantra*. As the faces are five, the total number of the streams is twenty-five. For instance, the Laukika Tantra is of five kinds and so are the Vaidika, Māntrika, etc. We mention it here to impress upon the fact that the Tantras are also looked upon as divine revelation and stand on the same footing as the Vedas.

This is also borne out by the use of the term '*Āgama*' as a synonym of '*Tantra*'. That it has 'come' from a divine source and has not been made or produced by any human agency is what is sought to be signified primarily by naming the Tantras as *Āgamas*. Of course, there is another fanciful derivation of this word, which takes the three component letters *ā*, *ga*, *ma* as denoting that body of literature which comes from (*āgata*) Śiva, goes to (*gata*) Girijā or Pārvatī, and is approved by (*mata*) Vāsudeva. In this connexion, we get another word '*Nigama*', which is taken to mean those Tantras of which the speaker is Pārvatī and the recipient is Śiva, as distinguished from *Āgama*. But this distinction between *Āgama* and *Nigama* is rather artificial and is not strictly adhered to everywhere. Bhāskararāya hints at another meaning of the term '*Nigama*' as denoting only those Tantras which conform to the Vedas, coming as they do from the mouth of the Lord as His commandments. (*teṣu vaidikāni nigamapadavācyāni parameśvarasya mukhād udbhūtatvād ājñārūpāṇi.*)

This brings us to another interesting point: the division of the Tantras into Vaidika and Avaidika. According to Lakṣmīdhara, the great commentator of the Tantras, all the sixty-four Tantras are Avaidika, though Bhāskararāya in his *Setubandha* states that it is wrong to call all the Tantras as Avaidika. Śaṅkar-

ācārya himself refers to the sixty-four Tantras in his *Saundarya-lahari*. So also in the *Vāmakeśvara Tantra*, *Sarvollāsa Tantra*, *Śrīkaṇṭhi-Saṁhitā*, and *Mahāsiddhisāra Tantra* we find an enumeration of sixty-four Tantras. Lakṣmīdhara tries to affirm, on the basis of a reference in the *Sanatkumāra-Saṁhitā*, that of all the Tāntrika schools, only the Samayācārins, who have a knowledge of the secrets of Śubhāgama, are Brahmavādins and Vaidikas. Of the other Tāntrika schools we find reference in the *Sanatkumāra-Saṁhitā* as follows: (1) Kaula, (2) Kṣapaṇaka, (3) Kāpālika, (4) Digambara, (5) Itihāsaka, and (6) Vāmaka. According to Lakṣmīdhara, all these schools worship the Cakra and are attached to external worship, while the Vaidika Samayācārins remain absorbed in internal worship of Bhagavatī or Śakti. This Samayācāra is based on five Āgamas, known as *Śubhāgama-pañcaka*, viz. *Vasiṣṭha-Saṁhitā*, *Sanaka-Saṁhitā*, *Śuka-Saṁhitā*, *Sanandana-Saṁhitā*, and *Sanatkumāra-Saṁhitā*.

Thus it is evident beyond doubt that there was a constant endeavour to assimilate, absorb, synthesize, or integrate the Tantras with the Vedas. Of course, the refined Vedic culture could not accept *in toto* all that the Tantras preached, professed, or practised. From this naturally grew the abhorrence to Tāntrika practices and these were strongly denounced and condemned. It will be interesting to note how the two, viz. Vaidika and Tāntrika, view each other, i.e. their mutual assessment. While the Vaidika looks down upon the Tāntrika as being beastly, i.e. unrefined in his conduct or *ācāra*, the Tāntrika condemns the Vaidika by the very same term and denounces it, i.e. his conduct as being *paśvācāra* (beastly conduct), because according to the Tantra, he alone is a *paśu* or beast whose divine power or *śakti* has not been roused as yet, i.e. lies dormant. In order to rouse it the Vaidika takes recourse to moral discipline, such as *brahmacarya* (state of continence). But the Tāntrika is a *vīra*, a valiant hero, who possesses the divine strength or *śakti*, and only he is entitled to enjoy the world (cf. *Vīrabhogyā vasundharā*—The world can only be enjoyed by a valiant hero; *Nāyam ātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ*—This Self is not attainable by a weakling; *Balalābhe viśvamātmasāt karoti*—On getting strength or power one grabs the entire world within himself) by becoming its master or lord (*svāmin*). The *vīra*, therefore, does not abhor Prakṛti but maintains a constant contact with it in order to dominate over

it until it is finally conquered, absorbed, or assimilated. With the total absorption of Prakṛti one attains the *divya ācāra*, the divine way, when he has nothing outside of himself to enjoy. Then he passes beyond all good and evil, injunctions and prohibitions—this is known as *svacchandācāra* or *svecchācāra*—to act in complete freedom, which is wrongly taken to be nothing but despotism by many who do not understand its real import. From *paśu* to *vīra* and then finally to *divya*—this is the order that the Tantras indicate as the way to life divine.

The Tantras are, therefore, a way of life and the term has later on taken the meaning of that which rules or governs, i.e. sets a pattern or form of approach, which being followed sincerely leads to the desired goal quickly and without fail. It follows naturally that *kriyā* or some form of practice must dominate the Tantras because what they embody is intensely practical. The Vedic approach is also practical as is evident in the elaborate ritual of the *yajña* or sacrifice but the Tāntrika *kriyā* differs from the Vedic in this that here the practice centres round the psycho-physical make-up of the practitioner, i.e. inward by nature, and is not turned outward through sacrificial ceremonies as in the Vedic. But we should not forget that the Tantras do not concern themselves with *kriyā* alone but always combine it with *vidyā*, esoteric knowledge. We shall deal with this *vidyāpāda* later on and we shall find therein the highest expression of philosophic wisdom which has no parallel in the world.

The Tantras flourished in three zones of India, which stand wide apart in distance from each other: Kāśmīra, Kerala and Gauḍa. From ancient times Bengal is predominantly a Tāntrika zone where we find very little of the Vedic culture and influence. At the same time, the Tāntrika pattern of Bengal was also unique and distinct from those of Kāśmīra and Kerala. Here we have the Kaula-dhārā which has its seat at Kāmarūpapīṭha, where the *upāsanā* or worship of Kālī—though of course not identical with the present-day Kālī-pūjā—is pursued. In Kerala we have the worship of Lakṣmī or Tripurā. But in Kāśmīra both the forms of worship are in evidence. It will be interesting to note in this connexion that Matsyendranātha, the great saint of the Nātha sect, was a great pioneer or advocate of the Kāmarūpapīṭha and it was possibly because he turned out to be a Kaula that he was disowned by the Nātha sect. Incidentally we may also mention

the name of the great poet Kālidāsa, which clearly indicates that during his time Kālī must have assumed an honoured position in the Hindu pantheon, for otherwise he could not have been so named. A Tāntrika work, *Cidgagana-candrikā*, is also attributed to him.

However, the philosophical aspect of the Tantras dominates in Kāśmīra, and the practical in Bengal, while in the South we have some philosophical thinking, which is dualistic in contrast with the non-dualistic thinking of Kāśmīra. It is interesting to observe that though the Bengalis are known to be intellectuals, yet they have not so much indulged in philosophic speculation as in the practical application of the Tantras. Even in what is called the renaissance of Bengal, we find that the Tantras could not be dispensed with even by such an intellectual giant as Raja Rammohun Roy. In fact, he married in the Śaiva way, which is considered to be abominable by many, and also took Tāntrika initiation from one Swami Hariharananda Bharati, who is supposed to have written a commentary on the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*, which, again, forms the basis of Brahmopāsanā as initiated by the Raja. The Brahma-stotra of the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* had an honoured place in the Brāhmo Samāja *upāsanā* (i.e. the religious service initiated by this new school) and the Ādi Brāhmo Samāj was the first to publish this *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* in 1876 under the editorship of Ananda Chandra Vedantavagisha. Thus, on the one hand, there was an attempt to bring in the Vedāntic thought through the study of the Upaniṣads and, on the other, to keep in touch with the Tāntrika tradition. The highest and most fruitful synthesis was, however, achieved in the life of Sri Ramakrishna who raised the Tāntrika form of worship to its divine status by actually demonstrating in his own person how this could be achieved. He went through all the Tāntrika practices under the guidance of Bhairavī (Yogeshwari Devi) but at the same time he had no hesitation to follow the Vedāntic way indicated by Nyāṅgṭā (Totapuri), though Bhairavī very much resented it. That the ultimate realization of Advaita is not possible without the adoration of Śakti seems to be the great pointer of Sri Ramakrishna's divine life. The Tantras advocate the worship of Śakti because through it one has the double fulfilment—*bhukti* (enjoyment) as well as *mukti* (liberation). It has been nicely put:

Yatrā'sti bhogo na ca tatra mokṣo yatrā'sti mokṣo na ca tatra bhogaḥ;
Śrīsundarīsevanatatparāṇāṁ bhogaśca mokṣaśca karastha eva.

(Where worldly enjoyment is, there is no liberation; where liberation is, there is no worldly enjoyment. But for those who are devoted to the goddess Śrī Sundarī both worldly enjoyment and liberation are within their grasp simultaneously.)

Ācārya Śaṅkara took to the worship of Tripurasundarī and arranged to install the Śrīyantra in all his monasteries. Buddhism also abounds in Tantricism. All this shows the wide and all-pervading influence of the Tantras in our national life.

II

Through a brief survey, we have attempted to bring out the wide influence of the Tantras on our spiritual life, especially in Bengal. We have also pointed out how the Vedic culture had to assimilate much of the Tāntrika tradition. Even the Buddhist, though professing Śūnyavāda or Nihilism, had to survive by taking recourse to Tantricism, which in course of time became more developed in China, Tibet, and other Buddhist strongholds than in India. Some even hold the opinion that we have got this Tāntrika tradition through Buddhism and originally it was not a part of Hindu culture. We hear of Cīna-tantras, Cīnācāra, and we are told that one Amoghavajra, a Brahmin *śramaṇa* (monk) of North India, resided in China between A.D. 746 and 771 and translated as many as seventy-seven Tāntrika works. The name of Atīśa Dīpaṅkara is too well known to be mentioned in this connexion; he was known to be proficient in all the forms of the Tantras. Buddhist Tantras are considered to be fairly old and their beginning may be traced as far back as the first century A.D.

Whatever may be the original source of the Tantras, there is no denying the fact that they have become an indispensable and most important part of our spiritual tradition. The attraction of the Tantras lies in the fact that they deal with the concrete and do not speculate or indulge in abstractions. The Tāntrika view of Reality is nowhere expressed in a better way than in the opening verse of *Śakuntalā* of Kālidāsa. There the poet bows down to that Lord who is visible or manifest in eight concrete forms before our eyes and he seeks His protection. This world as well as the indi-

vidual and the Time-force which makes them evolve are all the vesture or apparel of that One benign Lord. The Tantras, therefore, do not seek Him by negation but by the firmest affirmation that all this is nothing but the concrete manifestation of that Absolute. Nothing is to be shunned or given up. Everything has to be accepted, assimilated, sublimated, integrated with the very stuff of one's being. This total and complete acceptance of life as it is makes the Tantras so widely popular. There is no denying the fact that all of us want to enjoy life. Now this enjoyment or *bhoga* is generally looked down upon or denounced or renounced as it binds or restricts the self, keeps it chained to the objects of the world. The Tantras affirm that *bhoga* recoils on us because here we are not free to enjoy but are at the mercy of the things of enjoyment over which we have no control. It has been nicely put in a verse that we have not been able to enjoy the objects of enjoyment, instead we have been eaten up or devoured or enjoyed by them (*bhogā na bhuktā vayameva bhuktāḥ*). So the aim of the Tantras is to make our enjoyment free and absolute by establishing a complete mastery over the objects or forces of Nature. The goal of the Tantras, therefore, is to become the Lord and that is why the highest reality is called Paśupati. We have lost this lordship or mastery over Nature because we have allowed ourselves to be chained by *pāśa* or fetters, through which we have been turned into *paśus* (beasts or slaves). Now in order to get back the lordship we must acquire power (*śakti, bala*). The Tantras are, therefore, in search of power and their approach is known by the common term *Śakti-sādhanā*.

The Tantras affirm that what distinguishes Jīva from Śiva, the individual self from the supreme Self, is only the absence or non-manifestation of Śakti or Power. Man is essentially divine and can get back his true nature if he can rouse the latent power in him, which lies coiled in his very body. Arthur Avalon has made the words 'Serpent Power' very well known by naming his famous book on the Tantras as such. We all know that the serpent, when it sleeps, lies coiled but when it awakes, it gives up its coiled nature, makes itself straight, sometimes raises its hood, gives a hissing sound, and moves quickly. The imagery of the serpent is taken to signify that when it lies dormant or asleep, there is no trace of its immense vitality but it has to be roused or stirred or moved to manifest its potential power.

Similarly human beings are like corpses (*śavas*), merely dead, inert matter until the latent power which lies coiled at the base is roused and made manifest.

The Tantras, therefore, lay the utmost emphasis on *kriyā* or action. It needs a stirring movement, a push, a jolt to rouse one from one's deep slumber. This *kriyā* is known as *dīkṣā* or initiation by which the enlightened or awakened soul, who is called guru, rouses the latent divine power of the disciple. According to the Tantras, without having *dīkṣā* from a guru one cannot set one's foot on the spiritual path and no spiritual life therefore is possible without a guru. It is a new birth: guru is the father who puts the seed or *bīja*, and Vāgīśvarī is the *mātṛkā*, the mother, from whose womb is born the spiritual aspirant or *sādhaka*. Mantra also plays a very important part in Tāntrika *sādhanā*. All these basic concepts of the Tantras need a little elaboration, as we have a lot of misconception about them.

First of all, guru, according to the Tantras, is no one else than the supreme Lord Paśupati or Śiva. He is not only the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the world, but also its saviour or deliverer. For it is He who has brought forth this world by an act of self-repression (*nigraha*), which has resulted in a cruel punishment for all. So by an opposite act of grace or compassion this cruel act has to be mitigated. Being the supreme Lord, He alone wields this twin power of reward and punishment, *anugraha* and *nigraha*. Without this act of grace from above, no individual effort can ever succeed in effecting release from the world. The human guru is just a vehicle or transmitter of that grace. It is handed down from generation to generation and that is why *guru-paramparā* (the traditional line of sequence of the gurus) or *sampradāya-krama* (the order of a school or sect) is so much insisted upon. No one can become a guru on his own, he is only a link in the chain and unless he has established a relation with the mainstream he is not fit or eligible to become a transmitter of the supreme knowledge. It is for this reason that the Tāntrika insists on the *kulaguru* or family preceptor, who is supposed to possess this knowledge through the family tradition.

It may be mentioned in this connexion that the Tantras generally favour a householder guru and sometimes even prohibit initiation from a *yati* or *sannyāsin*. This is quite natural as the Tāntrika initiation is not for one to become a *sannyāsin*, i.e. to

give up the order of the householder one belongs to. His purpose of initiation is to infuse the *śakti* and unless he himself is united or joined with Śakti, he is not supposed to become eligible to initiate others. So he must be *Śaktyāliṅgita-vigraha*—embraced by or united with Śakti. A householder taking initiation from a *sannyāsi-guru* is a recent or modern phenomenon, which is not sanctioned by the Tantras. Possibly this came into vogue when the *kulagurus* fell into disrepute as they could not keep the flame alive by intensely pursuing their line of *sādhanā* and yet wanted to enjoy the status of a guru solely on the right of belonging to the family tradition.

Dīkṣā or initiation as we have already indicated, is the supreme act of transmission of divine energy which cuts the root of all ignorance. This transmission is done through the medium of *mantra* (a holy Word). The science of *mantra* is a vast subject by itself which needs a separate treatment. We shall, however, try to give a brief outline of it here. *Mantra* is no doubt a *śabda* or a word but it is a word with a difference. The spiritual aspirant is enjoined to look upon the letters of a *mantra* as permeated by Divine Power or Citśakti. It is not just a fanciful imagination or imposition of an idea but the statement of a fact. According to the Tantras, from the Saccidānanda or the Supreme Self came out Śakti or the primal Energy and from this Śakti originated the basic vibration or sound called *nāda*, which later on congealed or compressed itself into a *bindu* or nucleus of power. This *bindu* again burst into *nāda* to create complete focal points termed *bījas*. These *bījas* or seeds thus contain within themselves the Saccidānanda but as the guru transmits them on the physical plane called *vaikharī*, one is not immediately aware of the supreme power lying latent behind the outer covering. As the disciple is on the physical level, it is not possible for the guru to transmit the divine power without this outer covering. As a constant friction tears open a hard outer crust, so the constant repetition and intense meditation of a *mantra* give rise to a bursting of the outer shell. This is known as *mantra-caitanya*. The first sign of *mantra-caitanya* is the awakening or manifestation of *nāda* or the eternal sound. Words or letters then drop or melt in the moving stream of an unbroken vibration, *akhaṇḍa nāda*. This vibration of sound leads to illumination (*jyoti*) and through that illumination one is blessed with the vision of one's cherished

deity, ideal, or goal (*iṣṭa*) and the mind is then dissolved having got its fulfilment, leaving only the supreme Reality to shine by Itself.

Mantra thus plays the most important part in Tāntrika *sādhanā*. We must, however, remember in this connexion that even in the Vedic, *mantra* has a great role and the highest Vedic *mantra*, as we all know, is the Gāyatrī, which is again nothing but the adoration of Śakti. So it has been rightly asserted in a Sanskrit verse that all Brahmins are Śāktas because they all worship the great goddess Gāyatrī, who is the mother of the Vedas (*Śāktā eva dvijāḥ sarve*). It is She who is worshipped as Gāyatrī in the morning, as Savitṛ during midday, and as Sarasvatī during evening.

The difference, however, between Vedic and Tāntrika *mantras* lies in this that whereas the Vedic *mantras* are long and elaborate, the Tāntrika ones are extremely short and compressed within a letter or so. The *mantras* in the Tantras are as innumerable as the deities. Each deity has a separate *bīja-mantra* or Gāyatrī and only by taking recourse to a particular *mantra* pertaining to a particular deity, that deity can be worshipped or invoked as well as finally realized. A Tāntrika guru with his divine insight can determine which *bīja-mantra* is suitable for which disciple, for his (the disciple's) individual evolution depends absolutely on the right choice of his *mantra*. In this way the science of *mantra* has become much more developed and elaborated in the Tantras than in the Vedas.

We may here incidentally refer to the ten Mahāvidyās which illustrate how the *mantras* of the Tantras differed according to the deities, though they are all suppossed to be different forms of Śakti. Of these ten, Kālī, Tārā, and Ṣoḍaśī or Śrī or Tripurasundarī stand supreme. It is interesting to note how Śrīvidyā was linked up with Gāyatrī when a synthesis was being worked out between the two traditions, Vedic and Tāntrika. It is also interesting to observe how the Vedic seers like Vasiṣṭha, Viśvāmitra, Durvāsas, Agastya as well as his wife Lopāmudrā came to be known as the propounders of different Tāntrika schools of worship. Of them the most well-known division of approach is known by the cryptic names Kādimata and Hādimata and there is a third called Ka-Hā-dimata. In Gauḍa Kādimata prevails, in Kāśmīra Hādimata, and in Kerala Ka-Hā-dimata. The deity of

Kādimata is Kālī, of the Hādi Tripurasundarī, and of the Kahādi Tārā or Nīlasarasvatī. Agastya is said to have propounded Kādimata while his wife Lopāmudrā advocated the Hādimata. A story runs that Agastya was initiated in the Tāntrika cult by his wife, who was a princess and had access to the *vidyā* through her father, who used to worship Bhagamālinī. The Kādimata is also known by the name Madhumatīmata.

All these *matas* or viewpoints are only different schools of worship (*pūjā*). Before we conclude, let us, therefore, have a glimpse into the Tāntrika form of *pūjā*, for the performance of which one becomes eligible only after one's *dīkṣā* or initiation. This *pūjā* should be undertaken after taking a bath, *snāna*. What is that bath? It is an internal *māntrika* bath, *mantra-snāna* as it is called. One must dive deep into the heart or move to the source of the head, and he who can bathe in the Brāhmika waters that flow from these centres inside the body does not need any purificatory bath in the Gaṅgā. After this bath he must perform *sandhyā* or daily prayer. This daily prayer consists in nothing but the union of Śiva and Śakti. Then follows *tarpaṇa* which literally means 'pleasing' or 'fulfilling'. This is to be done by rousing the resplendent *kuṇḍalinī*, the coiled Energy, from the base or *mulādhāra* and then after joining it with the supreme source, the body is to be bathed by that nectar which flows from this union. In the *pūjā* or worship which now follows, it is this *kuṇḍalinī* which is to be worshipped. She must be roused from the base or *mulādhāra* and taken through the heart to the orb of the sun and then with the original *mantra* she should be bathed (*abhiṣeka*) by the nectar dripping from the moon from within the thousand-petalled lotus. All the best objects of the world should then be offered as flowers and consequently the *sādhaka* or worshipper becomes immediately absorbed with the object of worship. This absorption or identification is what is known as *nyāsa* (literally, imposition or permeation). The Tāntrika *pūjā* or mode of worship thus aims at a total identity of the individual self and the supreme Self, a complete permeation of the former by the latter. This is borne out once again in the last part of the Tāntrika *pūjā*, viz. *homa* or sacrificial ceremony where the worshipper offers the entire world in the flaming fire of knowledge, leaving Śiva or the supreme Self alone at the end (*Śivāvasānam*).

We may be accused that we have drawn a very noble picture of

the Tāntrika mode of fivefold worship, viz. *snāna*, *sandhyā*, *tarpaṇa*, *pūjā*, and *homa*, leaving aside or suppressing the other fivefold ignoble, obnoxious, and revolting practices, such as the use of the *pañca-makāras*, the five 'm's, viz. *matsya* (fish), *māṁsa* (meat), *mudrā* (snacks), *madya* (liquor), and *maithuna* (sexual intercourse), but if we go deep behind them we shall find that they also symbolize the highest *tattvas* or principles. The *Kulārṇava* rightly points out that those who miss the inner significance are mere drunkards or killers of animals as well as adulterers, i.e. indulge in sexual enjoyment under the cover of the spiritual. The Tantras, therefore, should be judged not from their debased form or gross misuse but from the standpoint of what they actually signify or aim at. Their aim is to enjoy life to the full by becoming one with the Divine Śakti, to go beyond virtue and vice, thereby becoming free while in life. We must, therefore, not spurn at the Tāntrika cult but try to revive it in its proper form, for therein lies the fulfilment of all our hopes and aspirations.

III

We have so far tried in our humble way to present the importance of the Tantras and their influence on our spiritual life even up to the present day. We have also tried to touch, in a very brief manner, on the essential aspects of the Tāntrika mode of worship, which is known as *kriyā-pāda*. But in the background of this *kriyā-pāda* lies the *vidyā-pāda*, the aspect of knowledge, where we find the expression of the highest philosophic wisdom.

Those who have a knowledge of the Indian philosophic tradition are aware that it is mainly founded on the Vedas. In a way the different philosophical systems of India arose out of an attempt to interpret the wisdom of the Vedas. In a similar way, later on, the words of the Buddha and Mahāvīra also came to be interpreted, out of which arose the heterodox systems of philosophy, like the Bauddha and Jaina. The Cārvāka system of philosophy had also in its background the *sūtras* of Bṛhaspati. Similarly the Kāśmīra Tāntrika or Āgamika system of philosophy arose out of the *Śiva-Sūtras*, whose authorship is attributed to Śiva himself and which are said to have been revealed to the sage Vasugupta towards the end of the eighth or beginning of

the ninth century. From Vasugupta it was handed down to Kallaṭa, then to Somānanda, Utpalācārya and others and this philosophy got its most exhaustive and elaborate treatment in the hands of the great polymath, Abhinavagupta.

This system of philosophy which flourished in Kāśmīra is commonly known as Trikaśāsana, Trika-śāstra (the threefold teaching), and also by the name Ṣaḍardha-krama-śikṣā or Ṣaḍardha-krama-vijñāna (the half of six i.e. three serial teachings), because it is based on half of six, i.e. three, fundamental principles, viz. Śiva, Śakti and Anu, or Pati, Pāśa and Paśu, or Nara-Śakti-Śiva. But these three principles are ultimately one and the same and therefore this system of philosophy is the highest expression of monism (Advaita), as will be evident presently. There are also dualistic Tāntrika systems of philosophy but here we propose to deal only with the highest expression of the monistic Tāntrika philosophy, which flourished in Kāśmīra.

The most remarkable feature of this Advaita Āgamika or Tāntrika philosophy lies in its integral nature in which nothing is to be left out. Even the viewpoints of all the different systems of philosophy are looked upon as expressions of the different levels of experience of the same supreme Reality, i.e. the Self. Every system is in search of the Self: the Cārvāka stops at the level of the body and thinks that the body alone is the Self; similarly the Bauddhas take up the processes of the mind as the Self and deny its separate or independent existence; and so on. The Trika system, therefore, does not deny or oppose any philosophical viewpoint but integrates them all in an ascending series of all-comprehensive realization. We are reminded in this connexion of the famous utterance of Sri Ramakrishna : *Yata mata tata patha* (There are as many ways as there are points of view), which he actually illustrated in his divine life by travelling himself along all the different paths to find their essential unity.

The second remarkable feature of this system consists in its presentation of the highly abstract philosophical concepts through the concrete symbols of the letters of the alphabet (*varṇamālā*), by which a flood of light has been thrown on the deep significance of the *mantras* and in this process, one may say, Tāntrika philosophy has become fused with Tāntrika religion, what is known as *kriyā-pāda* (section dealing with actions or

ceremonials) has been linked up with *vidyā-pāda* (section dealing with knowledge or inner philosophical significance).

Let us now try to make a brief survey of the fundamental teachings of this system of philosophy. The main problem of all the different systems of philosophy is to explain or resolve the dichotomy between the subject and the object, the *grāhaka* (the knower) and the *grāhya* (the known), the *aham* (the Self or I) and the *idam* (the objective world or this). We all know that the subject is looked upon as pure consciousness without the least trace of objectivity in it. But how and wherefrom has appeared this multiple and complex world of objectivity? Is it a mere appearance or has it any reality? The Vedānta keeps the subject pure and unsullied by explaining all objectivity as creation of Māyā and therefore unreal. The Sāṁkhya accepts the reality of the objective world and as a consequence is forced to own the duality of matter and spirit, leaving the complex objective world to the domain of Prakṛti, which evolves out of its womb, and the subject or Puruṣa is only a witness or enjoyer of all that Prakṛti manifests or presents before him, and as such he has no part to play in the creative process or evolution of the world. The Trika system, on the other hand, explains all objectivity as the projection of the one eternal subject. This projection becomes possible because of the eternal inherence of the supreme Energy or Śakti in the supreme Self or Śiva. The ultimate reality is, therefore, termed in this system as Śiva and he is distinguished from Brahman of the Vedānta in this, that whereas Brahman is endowed with the triple activity of creation, preservation, and destruction, this Śiva has five eternal functions, i.e. two more than the three functions referred to above, which are fundamental, viz. *anugraha* and *nigraha*. By *anugraha* he reabsorbs what he had thrown out as a separate outer world of objectivity and by *nigraha* he projects or brings out the world of external things from himself.

Śiva is thus endowed with the twin function of contraction and expansion (*saṅkoca* and *prasāra*) and this twin function may be attributed to the eternal presence of *vimarśa* or power of reflection in the very heart of *prakāśa* or pure awareness. This pure consciousness or awareness is called in this system not by the common term *cit* but by *citi* or *citiśakti* to indicate that the power of Self-reflection is always inherent in consciousness. This does not involve duality because there is, in fact, no difference

or distinction between Śiva and Śakti, *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*. It is the same one reality which is called by the name of Śakti, when the power of Self-reflection is active and it is again called Śiva, when that power lies absorbed or is inactive or passive.

The entire outer world of objects (*prameya*) is thus within this consciousness and when we have that realization we are in the state of *parapramātā*, the supreme knower. But when that consciousness contracts or withdraws itself, there is a vacuum in which state we are only *śūnyapramātā*, the knower of the void. Then this void is gradually filled up with *vikalpas* or mental formations of diverse character and we are confronted with a world of multiplicity in which we are aware of specific limited things and this state is known to be that of *mitapramātā*, the knower of measured or limited objects.

According to this system, therefore, the goal should be an expansion of consciousness till the entire world of existence is grasped, included, and absorbed within it. The limited awareness should give way to the unlimited. This is indicated by the term *pūrṇāhantā*. Not a dissolution (*vilaya*) of the ego (*aham*), as is the aim of the Vedānta, nor its separation (*viyoga*) from the touch of the outer world (*idam*) to preserve its sanctity and purity as in the Sāṁkhya, but a re-cognition (*pratyabhijñā*) of its fullness by reabsorbing (*yoga*) what had gone out of itself through non-cognition (*akhyāti*) or delusion, is the aim of the Tantras.

This system of philosophy is, therefore, called the philosophy of re-cognition (*pratyabhijñā*). The world which we cognize as separate from us is to be re-cognized as the very stuff of our being. We have forgotten this identity between the subject and the object and that awareness has to be recovered. It is an act of remembrance of what we have forgotten. There is thus a play of Māyā or delusion which makes us forget the real relation between the subject and the object.

We must, however, be careful to remember that though the Tāntrika system of philosophy recognizes the existence of Māyā, it operates much later in the lower hemisphere of existence. The Tantra recognizes a higher hemisphere, an ideal world of pure existence where the impurity of Māyā is wholly absent. It is the world of Mahāmāyā or is known by the technical term *baindava jagat*, the world that is compressed in the original seed or dot, i.e. *bindu*. Even this world is not absolutely pure because objectivity

or materiality has touched this Mahāmāyā, which is therefore *acit* or unconscious. Beyond this *baindava* world or the world of Mahāmāyā lies the *Śākta* world, the world of pure consciousness, which is completely free from the trammels of materiality or unconsciousness.

The Trika system in explaining the evolution of the world, therefore, goes beyond other systems of philosophy, because it tries to trace it from the original source step by step. It posits thirty-six *tattvas* or categories instead of the twenty-four or twenty-five of the Sāṁkhya. The twenty-five *tattvas* are recognized and kept as they are but above them are posited eleven more to explain how Puruṣa and Prakṛti themselves come into being. Of these the first is Śiva, then Śakti, and the third is Sadāśiva (or Sādākhya, i.e. which is termed *sadā*) where we have the first trace of *sat* or being or existence. Then follows śvara from whom is manifested the *sadvidyā* or real knowledge. These five are the perfect and pure way or order called *śuddha adhvan* where things are realized as they truly are in the purely ideal state of manifestation and therefore this state is the state of pure knowledge or true knowledge (*śuddha vidyā*). Then intervenes Māyā and we set our foot on the *aśuddha adhvan*, the impure or imperfect way. Māyā brings in its train the five *kañcukas* (coverings) restricting the five powers, viz. *nityatva* (eternality), *vyāpakatva* (all-pervasiveness), *pūrṇatva* (self-sufficiency or fullness), *sarvajñatva* (omniscience), and *sarvakartṛtva* (omnipotence), respectively by *kāla* (time), *niyati* (fixity in space), *rāga* (hankering), *vidyā* (limited knowledge), and *kalā* (partial or limited power of action). In this way the *Īśa*, the Lord, becomes *anīśa*, the slave, a captive of his own inherent powers and is turned into Puruṣa and he is now confronted by Prakṛti (Nature or Matter) with its three *guṇas* (aspects or qualities). Prakṛti goes on evolving as *buddhi* (intellect), *ahaṁkāra* (ego), and *manas* (mind) and it is very interesting to note that the sense of *aham* or I which is basic to consciousness does not disappear at any stage but there it manifests itself through the cover of Matter or Prakṛti or *idam*. As a result he takes the evolutes of Prakṛti, viz. *buddhi*, *manas*, *indriya* (sense-organ), *deha* (body), etc. as himself. In other words, his sense of '*aham idam*' (I am all this) is reversed here through delusion into '*idam aham*' (this much am I). With the five senses of knowledge as well as the five powers of action he now moves in the world of

five general objects of sense-perception. The last five, viz. *pañca-mahābhūtas*, as the principles of materiality now make his imprisonment concrete and complete.

Now to get out of this imprisonment which is self-imposed, the Tantras point out that the self has become *samsārin* (bound in the world), because he is *śakti-daridraḥ*, bereft of, or deficient in, power and the only way to freedom is to regain that power. Then the whole outer existence, i.e. the world, is subsumed within the self (*balalābhe viśvam ātmasāt karoti*) and he feels that all this is nothing but his own wealth or possession and the world is only his sport or play of self-projection. It is this ideal of *jīvanmukti*, to be free while in life, that the Tāntrika sets before himself. To be stationed in the Nitya or Eternal unchanging status and yet enjoy the Līlā, the world of change and multiplicity, as Sri Ramakrishna used to put it, is the goal of the Tāntrika. This becomes possible not by severing one's ties with Prakṛti, nor by going beyond Māyā, but by being joined with Śakti, which is not inconscient like Prakṛti nor indescribable like Māyā, but an indispensable part of the supreme Consciousness.

This eternal coalescence of Śakti with Śiva is indicated by the letter *i* in the word *Śiva*, without which he is turned into *śava* or a lifeless corpse. In a wonderful analysis of the letters of the alphabet, *varṇamālā*, this unique philosophy demonstrates that the order of the alphabets like *a*, *i*, *u*, etc., has a definite link with the process of creation. It is recounted that at the end of his dance, the Naṭarāja, the king of all dancers, i.e. Śiva beat his drum fourteen times and out of this drum-beating was created the *Māheśvara-Śūtras* the first of which consists of the three basic vowels, *a*, *i*, *u*. This is the basic triangle, which contains within it the seeds of the entire creation. The original or primal vowel is *a*, which represents the ultimate reality beyond which there is nothing (*anuttara*). But this *a* is not capable of creating anything unless it is seized with the desire (*icchā*) which is represented by the next basic vowel, *i*. When *a* is joined with *i* the first sign of creation or manifestation sprouts forth, which is *unmesa*, indicated by the third vowel, *u*. But the primal vowel *a* cannot by itself have the desire for creation. It has first to bifurcate itself, split itself up, into two—*a*—*a*—to be joined again as *ā*, which is the symbol of *ānanda* or delight of Being. The entire creation is thus nothing but the delight of self-expression. The

joining of *a* with *i*, i.e. the formation of *ekāra*, is the crux of all existence and so the Tantras look upon *e* as the *yoni akṣara*, the procreating letter, the womb of creation. Abhinavagupta expresses this very beautifully in a verse in his *magnum opus*, *Tantrāloka:* the primal vibration represented by *a* as well as the overflowing delight denoted by *ā* becomes joined with *icchā* and *unmeṣa* (*i* and *u*), desire and its manifestation, and thus assumes infinite variety. Similarly the word *a-ha-m* represents the entire gamut of our existence or experience. It begins with the first vowel *a* and ends with the last consonant *ha*, the two poles being encircled or joined by the dot or *bindu*, represented by *m*.

In this way, this Tāntrika philosophy has opened up a new vista of experience in the field of Indian philosophy and religion and if we can probe deep into it, we are sure to benefit immensely thereby and there can be no question of discarding it as vile and obnoxious. We are the inheritors of a great tradition and must try to understand it fully in order to revive it in its full glory. It is heartening to find the increasing interest in the study of the Tantras both in the East and the West, which was originally initiated in the first half of this century by Sir John Woodroffe and a host of Bengali scholars like Pandit Sivachandra Vidyarnava, Professor Pramathanath Mukhopadhyaya, Professor Jagadish Chatterjee, and Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj.*

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V

THE SPIRIT AND CULTURE OF THE TANTRAS

Atal Behari Ghosh

CLASSES AND NUMBER OF THE TANTRAS

DR. Winternitz says, 'When we speak of Tantra, we think primarily of the sacred books of the Śāktas'. This shows how little attention is paid to the wide variety of meanings of the word '*tantra*'. We are here concerned with that class of Tantras which deals with worship or *sādhanā*. The Tantras lay down different forms of practice for the attainment of the highest aim of human existence by one living the ordinary life of a householder. In this respect they correspond to the *upāsanā-kāṇḍa* of the Śruti. The Tantras fall under five heads, viz. Śaiva, Śākta, Vaiṣṇava, Saura, and Gāṇapatya. These five classes of worshippers are collectively called *pañcopāsaka*. Each of these classes of worshippers has its own Tantras.

Scholars of the present day are much concerned to ascertain the age of the Tantras. In the Purāṇas we find that both the Vaidika and Tāntrika forms of worship are mentioned. Hence the Tāntrika forms must have existed during, if not before, the Purāṇas. The theory that the Tāntrika age followed the Paurāṇic age therefore falls to the ground. There are some who theorize that the Tantras are post-Buddhistic. This also cannot be accepted, if the authority of the *Lalitavistara* is of any value. In the seventeenth chapter of that book, it is said the Lord Buddha condemned the worship of Brahmā, Indra, Viṣṇu, Kātyāyanī, Gaṇapati, and so forth, many of which were well-known Tāntrika forms of worship. The Buddhists also have their own Tantras, which mention names of deities, such as Ādibuddha, Prajñāpāramitā, Mañjuśrī, Tārā, and Ārya-Tārā. If the texts of the Brāhmaṇic and Buddhistic Tantras are compared, considerable similarity will be found in the methods of the two classes.

The *Nārāyaṇīya Tantra* says that the Vedas have originated from the Yāmalas, which form a class of Tantras of considerable

magnitude. The passage in question states that the teachings of the *Sāma-Veda* find expression in the *Brahma Yāmala*, those of *Ṛg-Veda* in the *Rudra Yāmala*, those of the *Yajur-Veda* in the *Viṣṇu Yāmala*, and those of the *Atharva-Veda* in the *Śakti Yāmala*. These verses, which have been quoted by the great Siddha Sarvānanda in his compendium called the *Sarvollāsa Tantra*, may also mean that the Yāmalas preceded the Tantras.

There is a difference of opinion as to how many Tantras there are. According to the *Mahāsiddhasāra Tantra*, Bhāratavarṣa is divided into three *krāntās* or divisions, viz. *viṣṇu-krāntā*, *ratha-krāntā*, and *aśva-krāntā*, and each of these *krāntās*, it is said, has sixty-four Tantras. The *Śakti-maṅgala Tantra* says that the land east of the Vindhya Hills extending right up to Java is *viṣṇu-krāntā*. The country north of the Vindhya Hills including Mahācīna is *ratha-krāntā*. The rest of the country westward is *aśva-krāntā*.

The *Ṣaṭ-sambhava-rahasya* says that in Bhārata there are four *sampradāyas* (schools), viz. Gauḍa in the east, Kerala in the middle, Kāśmīra in the west, and Vilāsa, which is a sort of eclectic school, not confined to any particular region, but found everywhere.

TYPES OF SĀDHANĀS AND SĀDHAKAS

The different Brāhmaṇic or, as it is miscalled, Hindu forms of worship lead the worshipper to the supreme Brahman. The singular distinction of Brāhmaṇism is to have recognized that men vary in temperament and in various other ways. The Tantra classifies mankind primarily under three heads, viz. the man with a *divya* or divine disposition, the man with a *vīra* or heroic disposition, and the man with a *paśu* or animal disposition. The *Bhāvacūḍāmaṇi Tantra* gives a detailed description of not merely these classes of men, but also of the innumerable subsections under these heads. *Bhāva* (disposition) forms a very important factor in the process of *sādhanā*.

Padmapādācārya, the disciple of Śaṅkarācārya, in his commentary on the *Prapañcasāra*, says that there are five different ways in which the teachings of the Śāstra have to be considered. These five ways are: (1) *sthūla* (gross), (2) *sūkṣma* (subtle), (3) *kāraṇa* (causal), (4) *sāmānya* (cosmic), and (5) *sākṣin* (witness-like). Now every one is not competent to consider things from

these five different view-points. The *paśu* man can hardly be expected to see beyond the *sthūla* or material aspect of things. In the *vīra* man there is an urge to reach the plane beyond matter, and the true *vīra* is he who is fighting the six enemies—the passions—which obstruct the path of spiritual advancement. The man of *divya* disposition is, as a result of his practice in previous births, endowed with qualities which make him almost divine. The *Kāmākhyā Tantra* says that the man of *divya* disposition is the beloved of all and is sparing in his words, quiet, steady, sagacious, and attentive to all. He is always contented and is devoted to the feet of his *guru* (teacher). He fears no one, is consistent in what he says, and is experienced in all matters. He never swerves from the path of truth and avoids all that is evil. He is good in every way and is Śiva's very self. The *vīra* is a man of fearless disposition, inspires fear in the man of *paśu* disposition, and is pure in his motive. He is gentle in his speech and is always mindful of the five *tattvas* (principles). He is physically strong, courageous, intelligent, and enterprising. He is humble in his ways and is ever ready to cherish the good. The *paśu* is a man whose inclinations are like those of an animal. He is a slave to his six enemies—lust, anger, greed, pride, illusion, and envy.[1]

THE SEVEN ĀCĀRAS AND THE SAPTA-BHŪMIKĀS

Closely connected with the three *bhāvas* are the seven *ācāras* or rules of conduct, which are given in the *Kulārṇava Tantra* as follows: *veda*, *vaiṣṇava*, *śaiva*, *dakṣiṇa*, *vāma*, *siddhānta*, and *kaula*. The aspirant rises step by step through these different *ācāras* till he reaches the seventh and highest stage, when Brahman becomes an experiential reality to him. In the first stage, cleanliness of the body and mind is cultivated. The second stage is that of devotion (*bhakti*). The third is that of *jñāna* (knowledge). *Dakṣiṇa*, which is the fourth stage, is that in which the gains acquired in the preceding three stages are consolidated. This is followed by *vāma* which is the stage of renunciation. This does not mean, as has been said by the detractors of the Tantra, the

[1] The *Sarvollāsa Tantra* as also the *Kaulāvalī-nirṇaya* will help inquirers who cannot get the *Bhāvacūḍāmaṇi*. This latter book and the *Sarvollāsa* have not been published.

practice of rites with a woman (*vāmā*). *Vāma* is the reverse of *dakṣiṇa*; it means the path of renunciation. If a woman is at all associated in this practice, she is there to help in the path of renunciation, and not for animal gratification. A woman as such is an object of great veneration to all schools of Tāntrika *sādhakas* (seekers). She is considered to be the embodiment on earth of the supreme Śakti who pervades the universe. She should therefore be revered as such and, even if guilty of a hundred wrongs, she is not to be hurt even with a flower. It is a sin to speak disparagingly of any woman. The sixth stage, viz. *siddhānta*, is that in which the aspirant comes to the definitive conclusion after deliberate consideration as to the relative merits of the path of enjoyment and that of renunciation. By pursuing the latter path, he reaches the final stage of *kaula*. This is the stage in which Kula or Brahman becomes a reality to him. The first three of these seven stages, viz. *veda*, *vaiṣṇava*, and *śaiva* belong to *paśubhāva*; *dakṣiṇa* and *vāma* belong to *vīrabhāva;* and the last two belong to *divyabhāva*. According to some, the last alone is *divyabhāva*. And the *Paraśurāma Kalpa-Sūtra* says that during the first five stages the aspirant must be guided by the teacher, and it is only after he has passed the fifth stage that he is allowed to have freedom of action in every way. The *Viśvasāra Tantra*, alluding to the importance of the *bhāvas* and *ācāras*, says, 'He truly is liberated in this life who knows the seven *ācāras* comprised within the three *bhāvas*'. It may be noted here that the seven *ācāras* correspond, with very slight difference, to the seven *jñāna bhūmikās* (knowledge planes) described in the *Yogavāśiṣṭha*, which are: *vividiṣā* or *śubhecchā*, *vicāraṇā*, *tanumānasā*, *sattvāpatti*, *asaṁsakti*, *padārthabhāvinī*, and *turīyā*. The difference between the *ācāras* of the Tantra and the *jñāna-bhūmikās* of the *Yoga-vāśiṣṭha* is that in the former the aspirant reaches *jñāna* through the path of *bhakti* (*vaiṣṇava ācāra*), whereas in the latter path of dry ratiocination, the stage of *tanumānasā* (*bhakti*) comes to him when, after passing through a number of insurmountable difficulties, he finds that without *bhakti* he can make no further progress.

THE TEACHER AND THE DISCIPLE

Like the Śruti, the Tantra lays great emphasis on the necessity of initiation. A good teacher is defined as a man of pure birth and

pure disposition, who has his senses under control. He should know the true meaning of the Āgamas (Tantras) and other Śāstras (scriptures), always be doing good to others, and be engaged in repetition of God's name, worship, meditation, and offering oblations in the fire. He should have a peaceful mind and must possess the power of granting favours. He should know the Vedic teachings, be competent in *yoga*, and be charming like a god. The characteristics of a good disciple are as follows: He should be of good parentage and guileless disposition, and be a seeker of the fourfold aim of human existence.[2] He should be well read in the Vedas and be intelligent. He should have his animal desires under complete control, always be kind towards all animals, and have faith in the next world. He should not associate with non-believers (*nāstikas*), but should be assiduous in his duties in general, alert in the discharge of his duties towards his parents in particular, and free from the pride of birth, wealth, and learning in the presence of his teacher. He should always be willing to sacrifice his own interests in the discharge of his duties to the teacher, and be ever ready to serve him in all humility.

The disciple should always bear in mind that his teacher is immortal. This does not mean that the human teacher is so; he is the channel through which the spirit of God descends. The true teacher is the supreme Brahman or Śiva or, as some say, the primordial Śakti. The position of the human teacher is one of very great responsibility, which does not end with initiation. He has to look after his disciple's welfare in every respect and guide him. He is called the physician of the soul, and a healthy soul can abide only in a healthy body. He has to see that even in matters of health the disciple goes the right way. The teacher who is conscious of his responsibility does not initiate in a hurry, and the Śāstra enjoins that the disciple should not accept a teacher to whom he is not attracted. The mode of initiation is not in every case the same and varies according to the disposition and the competency of the disciple. The ordinary mode of initiation is called *kriyā-dīkṣā*. This may be an elaborate process consisting of many rituals. Men of higher competency are initiated by other methods. The initiation which is the quickest and most

[2] Attainment of moral (*dharma*), economic (*artha*), and aesthetic (*kāma*) perfections, as well as of liberation (*mokṣa*).

effective is called *vedha-dīkṣā*. A person initiated according to this method realizes at once the oneness of his own self with that of the teacher, the *mantra* (sacred formula), and the deity. He becomes, as the Tantras say, the very self of Śiva. The disciples who are initiated according to other forms of *dīkṣā* arrive at this realization by slow degrees, each according to his competency.

DIFFERENT MODES OF WORSHIP

Our scriptures say that it is beyond the average man's intelligence to apprehend the supreme Being who is the ultimate Reality, *para-tattva*. It is said in the Tantras that Brahman, who is mere *jñāna*, impartite, and without a body, cannot be worshipped by the average man; so a form is adopted by the aspirant for the purpose of his practice. The Tantra again says: 'The deity of the *vipra* (ritualist) is in the fire into which he offers oblations; that of the man of contemplation is in his heart; the man who is not awakened sees him in the image; but the man who knows the Ātman sees him everywhere.'

It has already been said that there are five aspects in all Tāntrika teachings. Here four aspects of worship are given. The fifth aspect of the deity is beyond all description and all worship; for that is the stage where the worshipper and the worshipped become one. In the *Prapañcasāra* by Śaṅkarācārya and the *Śāradātilaka* by Lakṣmaṇa Deśikendra are given accounts of all the five methods of worship and their subdivisions. The *Tantrasāra* describes the rituals.

INITIATION OR DĪKSĀ

Initiation or *dīkṣā* means 'that which gives a knowledge of things divine and destroys all that leads to a fall'. The teacher, for example, explains how the three letters *a*, *u*, and *m*, constituting the Praṇava or *Aum* (*Om*), represent the three *guṇas—sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas;* how these are embodied in Viṣṇu, Brahmā, and Śiva; and how these three deities, again, can function only with the help of their respective Śaktis. The *guru* also teaches how the *Om* is but a subtle form of the sacred formula '*haṁsaḥ*', also called the *ajapā-mantra*, which is the carrier (*vāhana*) of Brahmā, the Creator, inasmuch as *haṁsaḥ* means 'the breath of life'. *Haṁ* is inspired breath and *saḥ* is that which is expired.

Everything movable and immovable breathes, and therefore Brahmā, who is nothing but the creative aspect of the supreme Substance manifest in the world, is represented as seated thereon. To the ordinary man *haṁsaḥ* is a water-fowl. The aspirant has also to learn that the *praṇava* contains within itself, besides the aforesaid three letters, *bindu*, *nāda* (sound), *śakti* (power), and *śānta* (quiescence). When he has learned this, he is to know that which is beyond *śānta* (*śāntātīta*). These remarks apply to every *mantra*.

CREATION OF THE UNIVERSE

The universe, some say, has been created by Sadāśiva, others again say that it has been created by Viṣṇu, and so on. There are some who say that the universe has no creator, while others say that it has many. There are some who hold that it, being the product of nature (*svabhāvottha*), is eternally existing; there are others who say that it is the great Śakti that created it. There is another class of people who maintain that the Virāṭ Puruṣa (universal Being) has created it. According to the Tantra, Śiva or Brahman has two aspects, *nirguṇa* (attributeless) and *saguṇa* (with attributes). As the former, He is transcendent and therefore dissociated from Prakṛti or Śakti; and, as the latter, He is associated with Śakti. It is out of this that *śakti* emanates; from that, *nāda* (sound); and out of *nāda*, *bindu*. This conception is put in another way. At the time of *pralaya* or final dissolution everything is withdrawn into the supreme Śakti. Thereafter, when Śakti, which is the *tattva* (substance), approaches the Light, which is *cit* or knowledge, there arises in the former the desire to create (*vicikīrṣā*), and the *bindu* is formed. This bursts and divides itself, and out of that division there arise *bindu*, *nāda*, and *bīja*. *Bindu* partakes of the nature of Śiva or *jñāna*, *bīja* is Śakti, and *nāda* is the relation between the two as the stimulator and the stimulated (*kṣobhya*). When the *bindu* bursts, there arises an inchoate volume of sound. This sound is called Śabda Brahman, which is the *caitanya* (stress towards manifestation in all beings) prevading all creation, and is the source of the letters of the alphabet, of words, and of other sounds by which thoughts are exchanged. All sounds (*śabda*) have meaning; sound and meaning are inseparable.

MANTRA

From *śabda* there arises the ethereal region; from touch, air; from colour, fire; from taste, water; and from smell, earth. It will be seen that the gross comes out of the subtle in the process of unfolding, and when it is reversed the gross disappears in the subtle. In this way, the aspirant begins with a gross material accessory, viz. the image, and rises step by step to that which is beyond word and speech. The image that is used in worship is the form of the *mantra* that is chosen for the worshipper by his *guru*, and represents his conception of Brahman (*svakīya Brahmamūrtiḥ*). One's *deva* is the form of Brahman evolved out of one's *mantra*. The Tantra claims that a man who worships his *iṣṭadevatā* (chosen deity), which is another name for his image of Brahman, in the prescribed manner, lives a happy and contented life, enjoys the objects of his desire, and, at the same time, uplifts himself spiritually. The worship of the *deva* of one's adoption means the worshipper's uplifting himself to the level of that *deva*, and when once this is secured, he arrives at a stage when he becomes competent to apprehend the supreme *deva*, Brahman.

The Tantra holds that the highest stage is Kula. The man becomes a *kaulika* only after he has passed through the six *ācāras* previously mentioned. It is further necessary for him to know the other modes of worship. It has been said that it is only to that man whose mind is purified by the *mantras* of Śiva, Viṣṇu, Durgā, Sūrya, Gaṇeśa, and others that *kula-jñāna* manifests itself.

THE PANCA-MAKĀRAS

It is a favourite pastime of some uninformed minds to indulge in invectives against the Tantra for the use in worship of the five *tattvas* (principles), commonly called the five 'M's (*pañca-makāra*). By these are meant wine, meat, fish, cereals, and sexual union. These five articles have different meanings for different classes of worshippers. It is to be noted that what one is required to offer is the *tattva* (principle, essence) and not the article itself. The object of using these five *tattvas* in worship is that by the repeated practice of the ritualistic observances one acquires a nature whereby everything one does in ordinary life becomes an act of worship. Śaṅkarācārya in his magnificent hymn to the

primordial Śakti concludes by saying, 'O Lady Supreme, may all the functions of my mind be Thy remembrance; may all my words be Thy praise; may all my acts be an obeisance unto Thee'. It is to induce a state of mind like this that the five things are used in worship.

The aspirant who partakes of the five *tattvas* to please the deity within him incurs no demerit. Such a man looks upon wine and meat as Śakti and Śiva, and is fully alive to the fact that the wine of which he is about to partake will make manifest the bliss that is Brahman within him. Every cup of wine is drunk with appropriate rites, and with the recitation of an appropriate *mantra*. Before drinking the first cup he says, 'I adore this, the first cup of nectar held in my hand. It is suffused with the nectar of the moon shining in the forehead of holy Bhairava. All the gods, goddesses, and holy men adore it. It is the ocean of bliss. It uplifts the Ātman'. An aspirant who is allowed to have ten cups meditates, while drinking, on his *guru* in the *sahasrāra*, the thousand-petalled lotus in the head, and on the goddess in the heart. He has his *iṣṭa mantra* at the tip of his tongue and thinks of his oneness with Śiva. The man who drinks the eleventh cup repeats the following *mantra:* 'I am not the doer, nor do I make any one else do, nor am I the thing done. I am not the enjoyer, nor do I make any one else enjoy, nor am I the object of enjoyment. I do not suffer pain, nor do I cause pain to others, nor am I pain itself. I am He (*so'ham*). I am Cit, I am Ātman.' These *mantras* have a threefold meaning: The gross one is the actual drinking of wine; the subtle one is the drinking of the nectar which flows from the union of the *kuṇḍalinī* (the coiled-up power) with Śiva in the *sahasrāra;* the third or the transcendent one is the nectar of happiness arising from the realization of the union of the supreme Śiva and the supreme Śakti.

The *Kulārṇava Tantra* says that the wine which gladdens is the nectar which flows from the union of the *kuṇḍalinī śakti* with Śiva at the *sahasrāra* in the head. And he who drinks this drinks nectar, and others are mere wine-bibbers. That man who kills by the sword of *jñāna* the animals of merit and demerit and leads his mind to the supreme Śiva is said to be a true eater of flesh. That man truly takes fish who controls all his senses and places them in his Ātman; others are mere killers of animals. The *śakti* of the *paśu* (the lowest class of aspirant) is not awakened, but

that of the *kaulika* is. The man who enjoys this *śakti* is said to be a true enjoyer of *śakti*. He is premeated by the bliss which arises out of the union of the supreme Śakti and Ātman, which is the true union; others are no better than fornicators.

It should be noted that the term for the fifth *tattva* is derived from the word *mithuna*, which means a couple. Since nothing in the world of experience happens without the combination of two things—even consciousness is impossible without it—, *maithuna* symbolizes the unity which is behind all this duality, which is beyond ordinary human comprehension, and which the *jīvan-muktas* (liberated in life) alone can apprehend. By the offering of this *tattva* to the chosen deity is meant the offering of the sense of duality, so that the underlying oneness may be realized. This is the true significance of the fifth item.

THE FOUR STAGES OF SPEECH

Something ought to be said here about the four stages of speech, in three of which sound is inaudible; it is only at the fourth stage that men give utterance to it. The first of these stages is *parā* located in the *mūlādhāra*, the lowest of the six centres in the spinal column, commonly called *cakras*. This is but a mere stress towards articulation. As this stress takes definite shape, it becomes *paśyantī*, which means 'seeing'. The next stage is reached when it arrives at the *anāhatacakra* opposite the heart; it then becomes *madhyamā*, which means 'middling'. These are the three names given in the Tantra to the three silent stages of vocal sound, and the last stage is *vaikharī*. There are some, the foremost among whom is Padmapādācārya, the chief disciple of Śaṅkar-ācārya, who hold that there are three other stages of sound prior to *parā*; Padmapāda, in commenting on the forty-third verse of the second chapter of the *Prapañcasāra*, says that the stages preceding *parā* are *śūnyā*, *saṁvit*, and *sūkṣmā*. The first is the vibrational stage, the next is that when the sound is about to form, and the third is that when it is forming. An adequate knowledge of sound is of vital importance in the Tantra.

THE SIX CAKRAS AND THE SIX ADHVANS

This leads us to the six centres, which are: (1) *mūlādhāra*, which is situated above the organ of generation and is the region

of earth; (2) *svādhiṣṭhāna*, which is just above the previous one and is the region of water; (3) *maṇipura*, in the spinal cord opposite the navel, of fire; (4) *anāhata*, opposite the heart, of air; (5) *viśuddha*, opposite the base of the throat, of ether; and (6) *ājñā*, opposite the junction of the eyebrows, of psychic vision. There are other centres beyond the *ājñā*. Opinion is divided as to the number of these *cakras;* some say that there are sixteen, and others that there are more. The piercing (*bheda*) of the six *cakras* is a process whereby the elements of which the body is composed are purified.[3] It is laid down that the attempt to pierce the six *cakras* should be made under the immediate guidance of the teacher, for the least mistake may lead to disastrous results. By this process the six paths (*adhvans*) that lead to a realization of the Supreme are mastered.[4] They are *kalā* (attribute), *tattva* (category), *bhuvana* (region), *varṇa* (letters), *pada* (words), and *mantra* (mystic symbols or words). The *kalās* are *nivṛtti*, *pratiṣṭhā*, *vidyā*, *śānti*, and *śāntyatītā*. The *tattvas*, according to the Śaivas, are thirty-six, and according to the Vaiṣṇavas, thirty-two. The Sāṁkhyas recognize twentyfour *tattvas*. The *tattvas* of Prakṛti are ten in number and those of Tripura are seven. The *bhuvanas*, according to some, are the ethereal, the aerial, the igneous, the aquatic, and the terrene regions. The *Vāyavīya Saṁhitā*, however, says that the lowest of these *bhuvanas* is *mūlādhāra* and the highest *unmanī*. It will be seen that whichever view is accepted, the different *bhuvanas* are the different stages of the mind of the aspirant. The *varṇas* are the letters of the alphabet with the nasal *bindu* superposed; and the *padas* are the words formed by the combination of letters. The way of *mantras* means the whole mass of *mantras* with their secret. At the time of initiation, the teacher shows how every letter of the alphabet, every word that is spoken, every *mantra* that was discovered by any sage, in fact, everything in existence points towards Brahman. By reason of our own limitations we are unable to see Him, though He is in and around us and is our very being.

Of very great importance are the letters of the alphabet. They

[3] It is described in detail in *The Serpent Power* by Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe). Dr. Hereward Carrington has attempted to put it in a popular form.

[4] In an article like this we cannot possibly enter into details. So in what follows we should content ourselves with a bare outline.

are called *mātṛkā* (mother). They are collectively the source from which every word and every *mantra* is evolved. Out of the *mantra*, again, is produced its deity. Śaṅkarācārya, in the opening verse of the *Prapañcasāra*, which is an adoration of Śāradā, says, 'May śaradā purify your mind'. The body of the goddess is composed of the seven groups (*varga*) into which the (Sanskrit) alphabet is divided. She is eternal and is the cause of the creation and of the dissolution of the universe.

ŚIVA AND ŚAKTI

The Tantras say that Śiva without Śakti is a lifeless corpse, because wisdom cannot move without power. It is at the same time said that the relation between Śiva, who is the possessor of Śakti, and Śakti Herself is one of identity; the one cannot be without the other. The attempt to identify Śakti with woman is an error. Śiva is commonly said to be the male principle, and Śakti the female principle. As a matter of fact, they are neither male nor female, nor are they neuter. The man who worships the wisdom aspect of Reality, commonly called the male principle, is a Śaiva; and he who worships the power aspect, or the female principle, is called a Śākta. Śiva as the ruler of the universe rides a bull, i.e. he rules according to *dharma*.[5] When Śiva is worshipped, His consort is also worshipped; for the two are inseparable. For the same reason, when Śakti is worshipped, Śiva is also worshipped. To some minds the Viṣṇu or pervasive aspect of Reality appeals as the proper way to realize the supreme Brahman. The rituals in Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava worship differ. Śakti is worshipped as Sarasvatī, the queen of speech. As such, in the enumeration of Śaktis, she is given the first place, and is the source from which all *mantras* emanate; she has different aspects with different *mantras*. Other aspects of Śakti are Śrī or Lakṣmī, Bhuvaneśvarī, Durgā, and Kālī.

The Tantras declare that, by following the rules laid down by them, the aspirant, though living the life of a householder, may yet achieve high attainments. The mere study of the Śāstras may give us some idea of the Śabda Brahman, but it is only by a discriminative knowledge of the essentials (*viveka*) that the

[5] *Satya* (truth), *sauca* (purity), *dayā* (kindness), and *dāna* (charity) constitute the four feet of *dharma* conceived as a bull.

supreme Brahman can be experienced. The illumination comes to him alone who, through practice in the manner enjoined by his own Tantra, has acquired *jñāna*, which teaches him that Brahmā the Creator, Viṣṇu the Protector, and even Śiva the Destroyer (i.e. one who withdraws everything at the time of the final dissolution) are all perishable, and it is the supreme Truth alone which endures for all times. The man who has realized that Truth has no necessity to know any scriptures, just as a man who has tasted nectar to his heart's content has no necessity for food.

VI

TANTRA AS A WAY OF REALIZATION

Swami Pratyagatmananda

VAIDIKA AND TANTRIKA CULTURE

THANKS chiefly to the enlightened and fruitful labours of the Āgama Anusandhāna Samiti, of which both Sir John Woodroffe and Atal Behari Ghosh were the leading lights, the investigation of the philosophy, religion, and practice of the Tantra Śāstra is no longer under a ban. Only a few decades ago it was grudgingly admitted that the Tantra contained some sense in its 'high' metaphysics; but this was merely an oasis in an endless desert of nonsense—or worse, of 'lust, mummery, and superstition'. Investigation into the Tantra or Āgama śāstra can now be reduced to a method. And what kind of method is this mainly to be?

The truth about the śāstra cannot, for example, be attained on the basis of an assumption that it is only a burial ground of forms and ideas long dead and obsolete. The assumption is palpably wrong. Hinduism in its present form involves, no doubt, 'a double framework', Vaidika and Tāntrika, but Tāntrika wings have not simply been added from time to time to the ancient Vaidika mansion. The process has been in the nature of a remodelling of the old structure in which its ground-plan has subsisted, but the edifice has been permitted to wear a new form and expression suited to new times and conditions. Whatever be the origins or sources of the Tāntrika ideas and forms, for ages these have been assimilated into the organism of the Vaidika culture, and all apparent contradictions and conflicts have long resolved themselves into the cohesive components and coefficients of comprehensive organic synthesis. This being so, it will not do to look upon the Tantra simply as a graft from a foreign plant which has since withered and decayed. The host tree has not simply cast off a dead limb; it lives in that limb as much as it lives in others. Some would even say that it lives in that limb more than it lives in any other. Others would go so far as to maintain that it is the foreign graft that has lived and thrived,

leaving the host stock slowly to wither and decay. But whether the Tantra was or was not in the nature of a foreign graft, the relation of the Tāntrika to the Vaidika culture has long ceased to be the relation between a graft and a host. The graft theory by itself, for instance, will operate as a perpetual bar to the coming of that dawn of sense which will make one see the whole as a living and growing reality. The deeper affirmities, presumably pre-existing when the so-called engrafting was effected, which compose and evolve the whole living tissue of the resultant organism, will, in that case, remain unobserved and unrecognized.

The Tantra is not simply a graft or a formation, morbid or otherwise, on Hinduism. It is of the living kernel, and not of the sheathing, or sometimes rotting, husk. The common obsession of many educated people, both foreign and Indian, still is that the worth of the Tantra, whatever that may be, should be appraised substantially apart from a general scheme of values to which Hinduism in its essence and in its 'pristine purity' must be subjected. Secondly, this graft or backwater theory has, on the one hand, found itself in natural alliance with the view so commonly held that the graft has been in the nature of a parasite or pathological excrescence', so naturally suggestive of the surgeon's knife or the doctor's recipe, and that the backwater has been in the nature of a stagnant pool of black, foul water full of noxious weeds and giving off a stench, and having no outflow into the mighty current of general Hindu cultural life.

'LEFT-HANDED' PATH

Certain ill-understood 'left-handed' practices (*vāmācāra*), for instance, have been commonly supposed to exhaust nearly the whole content of Tāntricism. Whilst, as we shall see, *vāmācāra* is based on the profound knowledge of the 'return current' or *nivṛtti*, which seeks to reverse the process of creating and maintaining the bonds of propensities, and conventions in which the Jīva or soul has been held as a *paśu* or animal, it must be clearly perceived that this path, as laid out in the Śākta Tantra with its special and esoteric ritualism (e.g. *pañcatattva*), is not the only one prescribed in the Tantra. The *Kulārṇava Tantra*, for instance, lays down as many as seven paths or *ācāras*, starting with *vedācāra* and ending with *kaula*. Some other Tantras have added two more to the list, viz. *aghora* and *yoga*. Here the im-

portant thing to note is that the denotation of the word '*tantra*' is as wide as it is varied, embracing not only the Śākta, but the Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Saura, and Gāṇapatya forms (with their numerous sub-species) within the fold of orthodox Hinduism itself. And we have well-developed Buddhist and other Tantras also outside this fold. All these various types, Hindu or Buddhistic, present, no doubt, many striking points of diversity, both as regards ideas and notations. As practical sciences of realization (*sādhana-śāstra*) bearing applicability to differing human competencies and constitutions, and different stages of the progress made by the 'healing' soul, the lines of treatment by the Śāstra and its prescriptions are bound to be of a varied nature. Aspirant souls in their spiritual endeavour have to carve out their own suitable paths or lines of approach, which will be found to diverge more or less at first from one another, but converge and tend to coalesce, as closer and closer approach is made to the final goal which is the same for all. So the wise will say: 'As many paths as persuasions (*mata*).'

The general body of Hindu ideas, beliefs, and practices will, on examination, be found to be permeated through and through by the cult of the Tantra, indeed so much so that the whole now bears a definitely Tāntrika character. The 'double framework' of Vaidika and Tāntrika has ceased in course of time to be 'double'. To take the case of the *vāmācāra* (which means the 'left'—*viparīta*—and not the 'left-handed' path) again: In this the *sādhaka* (aspirant) has to make use of a certain kind of ritual (technically called the *pañcatattva*) which, whilst leading admittedly to some abuse in unsuitable cases and conditions, has made, in the judgement of those who do not understand and discriminate, the whole cult of the Tantra suspect. Those who understand nothing of the 'return current' or 'reversing process', involved in the theory and practice of the so-called 'left' path, naturally fail to perceive that there may be any points of contact between this and the theory and practice of the Advaita Vedānta. Apart from the face that a full-blooded counterpart of the essentials of the *pañcatattva* worship, in their 'gross', 'proxy', and 'esoteric' forms, can be traced down to all the Vedic strata, and also apart from the probability of a modified shape being given to, and a special emphasis being laid on, the ancient, immemorial Vedic worship, by influences coming from outside the limits of India proper

(e.g. Tibet or Mahācīna), it ought to be recognized by all thinking people that the *pañcatattva* worship, in its principle and in its tendency, is a legitimate form of the Advaita worship.

The end of the *sādhaka* is, of course, to attain pure and perfect Cit — an untranslatable word — or Consciousness. This perfect Consciousness is also perfect Being and perfect Bliss. In the Vedānta as also in the Tantra, the word for this perfect state is Saccidānanda. Now, this perfect state is unattainable so long as that which limits or restricts it operates. The limiting power of Reality by which its unmeasured Being-Consciousness-Bliss is measured, and its alogical nature is made thinkable in terms of 'forms and categories', has been called Māyā in both. The Tantra, in particular, analyses the fundamental limiting power into certain special aspects called *kañcukas* or 'contractors'. But the essential thing is this that the *pūrṇa* or perfect state is not to be attained so long as Māyā and her *kañcukas* operate.

THE 'POLARITY' OF REALITY

By its self-limiting power, Reality 'polarizes' itself into that which is conscious and that which is not, that which is existent and that which is not, and that which is 'pleasant' and that which is not. The fundamental polarity of subject and object, *aham* and *idam*, is also evolved by it. By the process of polarization, that which is unmeasured becomes measured (*prameya*), the infinite is made finite, and the undifferentiated differentiated. By it, Reality which is absolute in itself becomes resolved, so to say, into a multiplicity of correlated centres of diverse natures, acting and reacting in diverse ways. It thus evolves into a universe of being and becoming. Some of the member centres of this universe evolve the power of feeling, cognition, and will, while others apparently lack this power. Some know, while some others are only known. Some enjoy, while others are only enjoyed. Some appear to act from within, while the rest are merely acted upon from outside. This power and the lack of it admit of all kinds of measures and degrees. But whatever these may be, all finite, correlated centres have their being and becoming determined by the conditions of the polarizing, finitizing, and limiting power by which they are created and evolved. The determining conditions which constitute, maintain, and evolve the centres necessarily limit or restrict them also. By them they are cons-

trained to become or remain such and such centres. What they were, what they are, and what they will be are thus determined. They are distinguished and differentiated from one another. Their respective behaviours, their actions and reactions, become such and such, that is, determinate. The determinants are therefore 'bonds' or *pāśa*, as they have been called in the Tantra Śāstra. The Jīva or the self finds himself in *pāśa* or fetters. By these, however, the whole fabric of a centre's common life and behaviour is woven into being, and it is by them that it is maintained and differentiated. The *pāśa* is the basis of behaviour (*vyavahāra*); it is of pragmatic value.

THE REALITY AS A 'CENTRE'

Yet the Reality has never ceased to be itself, that is, perfect Consciousness, Being, and Bliss, in thus evolving by its own inscrutable power into a multiplicity of conditioned centres. The *pāśa*, the determinant, the conditioning factor, must therefore be not something inherent in, or intrinsic to, the Reality of which a given centre is a function, evolute, and manifestation; it must be a kind of veil by which the Reality is 'hidden' without being effaced or suppressed. That which has ever been and never ceased to be has been ignored and practically 'negatived'. This is implied in, and incidental to, the very process by which a manifold of heterogeneous correlated centres can evolve out of perfect Being-Consciousness-Bliss which, however, never ceases to be itself at any stage of the evolving act.

THE 'CENTRE' AS THE 'POINT'

Even a finite centre, in any position in the curve of evolution, must never cease to be a 'point' of pure and perfect Reality. By 'point' is here meant that at and through which the *pūrṇa* or whole 'opens' itself and through which it can be reached or realized. But what is thus a point of co-essentiality and 'flow' from the side of Reality becomes a veil and a restrictor from the side of the universe of behaviour and convention. Point-facing, the Jīva-centre is none other than the Reality. Veil-facing, it is finite, conditioned, and in bondage or *pāśa*. If the direction of the process, by which the veiling and all that is incidental to it have been produced, be called outgoing, then, surely, to face the 'point' (at and through which perfect Being-Consciousness-Bliss is

'opened up'), that direction must be reversed. The 'sign' of the function has to be changed. We must have the 'return current' in the place of the outgoing. *Rādhā* in the place of *dhārā*, *so'ham* for *haṁsaḥ*. What now operate as bonds, determinants, oı *pāśa* must be so transformed and so directed that they may act as releasers or 'liberators', working out release from bondage. This is beautifully expressed by the saying: 'By that one must rise by which one has fallen.' It has been said also: 'The very poison that kills becomes the elixir of life when used by the wise.' The principle involved is a sound one; and the whole theory and practice of the so-called 'left'-*ācāra* is based on this principle. Every finite and determined centre is *ipso facto* a reversible apparatus. In ordinary life and behaviour, the apparatus works with a certain sign and with a certain result—which is a complex of bondage in *vāsanā* and *saṁskāra* (propensities and conventions, roughly speaking). of the varied complex Of *vāsanās*, some appear to be cardinal or primary. These are the prime movers of the Jīva in his ordinary activity; these constitute, so to say, the key-knots of the net of 'wandering' in which he is caught and held. Now, the question is how to use these cardinal Jīva-impulses of *bhoga* or enjoyment so that their sign may be changed and their very nature transformed and 'sublimated'. If that can be done, the apparatus that now binds and grinds will then be 'reversed' in its working, and the 'centre' will turn round and face and become the 'point' of perfect Being-Consciousness-Bliss.

OUTGOING CURRENT

The outgoing process has made a *paśu* (animal) of the Jīva by creating duality (*dvaita*) where, in fact, there is none. Thus certain things are sought, while others are shunned; some produce pleasure, others pain; some are true, some false; and so on. All such distinctions must be relative and pragmatic, if all be Brahman and there be nothing but Brahman. The cardinal desire of man and woman for each other, for example, and the fact of their physical union become 'carnal' on the relative and pragmatic plane, where the body is 'material' and the soul 'spiritual', and there is assumed a perennial conflict between the flesh and the spirit. The distinction is a valid one and may be of value so long as the Jīva remains on the plane of common conventions.

But he is a *paśu* in *pāśa* or bonds on that plane. Moral or social conventions, however desirable or suitable on that plane, do not make him other than a *paśu*. To be free from *pāśa*, that is, to be Śiva, he must be able to resolve that and every kind of duality. He must be able to realize in fact that nothing exists and functions but Śiva-Śakti. The so-called body is that; so is mind; so is the soul or spirit. And all action is play or *līlā* of Śiva-Śakti. In this realization nothing remains 'carnal' or 'gross'; everything becomes an expression and attitude of perfect Being-Consciousness-Bliss.

The essential thing therefore is the recognition of a veiled and 'lost' identity. In Vedānta, the commonest act of perception implies the restoration of a lost identity (as *caitanya* or consciousness) between the perceiver and the perceived, *pramātṛ* and his *viṣaya*. This essential identity must be worked out consistently and thoroughly, without leaving any precipitate of difference whatever, if the aspirant is to go beyond the plane of duality which has made a Jīva of Śiva. *Aham* and *idam*, the knower and the known, the enjoyer and the enjoyed, action and reaction must all be equated fundamentally to each other, and all resolved into the identity of Śiva-Śakti or God as Power. The outgoing process is one of differentiation and diversification; the return current must be one of increasing assimilation, integration, and identification. In the first, everything is ejected into separateness, exclusiveness, polarity, or even opposition. In the latter, it is drawn back and gathered into unity, harmony, and peace. The *laya* or *kuṇḍalinī yoga* is a practical demonstration of how the outwardly-directed evolving process is reversed, until the whole *prapañca* or universe is resolved into unitary Consciousness and perfect Bliss.

The projecting or outgoing process which is *haṁsaḥ* (represented particularly by the 'sun' and the 'vital breath') is reversed in that *yoga* as *so'ham*. The first evolves polarities and manifold of diversities. It affirms *dvaita*, *bheda* or non-identity. But the two currents never operate singly, one absolutely exclusive of the other. They are concurrent, though the emphasis is laid now on this and now on that. The emphasis again oscillates; it traces a curve. Hence in all affirmations of *dvaita* and *bheda*, the affirmation of *advaita* and *abheda* (that is, identity) is immanent. It is because of this that, even during the prevalence of the outgoing

or *haṁsaḥ* aspect of the dual process, a universe or cosmos involving unities, equalities, and similarities arises, and not a mere chaos of jarring and colliding 'atoms'. Now, if we may call a conditional identity and equation (which holds true under certain assigned conditions, but not under others), then it appears that in the realm of ordinary experience involving the *haṁsaḥ* process we are given equations and not identities.

Take for example man and woman. One can be equated to the other subject to certain limits, measures, and conditions. The polarity, antithesis, or difference is patent. We should be able to resolve and get beyond *bheda*. Failing this, man and woman will be the *pāśa* of each other, as they often are in common experience. But if identity, as distinguished from mere conditional, tentative equality, can be affirmed and realized, then the two poles or opposites will resolve into unity and will form one integral whole. The *pāśa*, the noose, then disappears.

TWO WAYS OF REAFFIRMATION

Generally speaking, there are two ways of reaffirming the lost identity. One is elimination or negation till negation is dead or is no longer possible. This is the well-known '*neti neti*' method of Māyāvāda Vedānta. It is to negate as *asat* or unreal the crust, sheath, or husk (*upādhi*) of a given object. If the *upādhi* of any other object be similarly eliminated, it will be seen that in the kernel the one is the same as the other, and each is Ātman or Brahman. Every kind of *bheda* or duality must be rigorously reduced to zero.

But an approach may be made to identity from another standpoint. It is the way of sublimation. Man and woman, for example, may thus be sublimated into cosmic principles, polar to each other in the outgoing or *haṁsaḥ* aspect of the cosmic process, but identified and unified Śiva-Śakti in reality, which is experienced in the reversing of the outgoing current. In reversing the process, we have to bring the two complements or poles 'together' so as to reaffirm and realize the identical whole. Using for one moment the so-called 'erotic symbolism' of Tantra Śāstra, the physical union of man and woman is sublimated as the creative union of Śiva-Śakti (that is perfect Consciousness at rest becoming dynamic as creative activity); the thrill of the act of union being *nāda* (a term later explained); and the 'seed' that

issues from the union is *bindu*. In the *vāmācāra* or 'left' path, which under certain very stringent conditions prescribes to the *vīra* or 'hero' *sādhanā* or ritual readjustment with woman, such sublimation of the so-called 'carnal' act has to be effected till the supreme *advaita* Śiva-Śakti experience with its perfect *ānanda* or Bliss is attained. It is this 'carnal' desire that constitutes one of the strongest *pāśas* of the *paśu* Jīva. The object is to make even this the 'opening' to the perfect whole of experience.

THE STEPS IN THE PROCESS

The method of sublimation consists of the steps *śadhana*, *śuddhi* or purification, *uddhāra* (lifting) or elevation, and *caitanya* or reaffirmation of identity in consciousness. By the first, a thing or an act is purged of its usual dross of grossness. This is done by reversing the direction of the ordinary worldly process or *pravṛtti*. In the evalution of the cosmic principles (the thirty-six *tattvas* as they are called), a certain stage is reached where pure or *śuddha tattvas*' 'cross the line' and pass into the impure or *aśuddha tattvas*. These latter constitute the realm of Nature (the region of Prakṛti and her evolutes), which is like a closed curve in which the Jīva is held a prisoner, and in which he wanders tracing his own curve of path in accordance with the equation of *karma*. Though essentially a centre of Śiva-Śakti, he is caught in the net of natural determinism from which there is no escape, unless the 'coiled' curve which encloses him can be made to uncoil itself and 'open' for his release and ascent in the realm of the *śuddha tattvas*. His hope lies in uncoiling the coil of Nature, technically called the 'awakening of the serpent-power or *kuṇḍalinī*'. Only thus can the impure elements or principles be purified and elevated from the *aśuddha* or *prākṛta* plane to the *śuddha* or *aprākṛta*. The face of the coiled serpent-power is ordinarily downwards; it must be turned upwards. The next step is *uddhāra* or elevation. The order in which the principles are evolved in the outgoing activity must be reversed with the starting of the return current; ascent must be made in the order opposite to that in which descent was made. From the grosser and more limited elements, we must rise to what are subtler and more general, until ascent is finally made to the level of perfect experience, which is Śiva-Śakti in one called *parā saṁvit*. The last

step is the reaffirmation and realization in consciousness of the supreme identiry.

Such is the general framework of the method to be followed. The Vaiṣṇava, the Śaiva-Śākta, and other Āgamas have their methods of sublimation that can be readily fitted into this framework. The *parā saṁvit* or the supreme experience may, however, be differently viewed. The Vaiṣṇava has, for example, his *śuddha* (pure), *aprākṛta* (supernal), and *cinmaya* (spiritual) *tattvas*, contradistinguished from others that are *aśuddha* (impure), *prākṛta* (common), and *jaḍa* (inert). The Jīva in his essence is of the former. But he is not to be identified with the supreme *tattva* who is Bhagavat Puruṣottama. He is of the same pure essence and is a manifestation of God-power in a certain aspect. He is a 'point' (*cit-kaṇa*) at and through which contact is established with the essence of divinity.

The Śiva-Śakti school of Tantra is a presentation of Advaita Vedānta from the point of view of a science of practical application and realization. It is a Śastra of *sādhanā* and *siddhi*. Pure and undifferentiated Consciousness (*nirviśeṣa cinmātra*) is, of course, affirmed as the basic aspect of Reality. But this pure *cit* is, in another aspect, the power to be and become, that is, to evolve as a universe of names and forms, and involve it again within itself as a seed. *Cit* as this power of self-evolution and self-involution is *cit-śakti*. *Cit* as the pure 'ether' or basis, and *cit* as the power to evolve and involve upon that basis, are not two, but one, viewed from the standpoint of being as such and from that of becoming. Perfect experience is experience of the whole—that is, of Consciousness as Being and Consciousness as power to become. The position has been fully discussed by Sir John Woodroffe and myself in our joint work, *The World as Power*.[1]

THE ACTUAL MODUS OPERANDI OF THE PROCESS

The Jīva as a centre represents a certain phase and position in the evolution-involution process of perfect *cit-śakti* by which a universe arises and is withdrawn. Broadly speaking, evolution

[1] In six parts. I may refer especially to the last part called *Mahāmāyā* dealing with *cit-śakti*; the philosophically minded reader is also referred to my *Introduction to Vedānta Philosophy* delivered as a course of lectures in the University of Calcutta.

means the patent, kinetic aspect, while involution means the latent, static, or potential. Every form, of being or centre is thus a kinetic-static composite. An atom of matter is so; a unit of organic matter or a cell of protoplasm is so; mind or *antaḥkaraṇa* is so. The polarity of static-kinetic is everywhere. In the complex apparatus of 'the gross, subtle, and causal' forces, which is the 'body' or vehicle of the Jīva, the static or potential pole of creating, sustaining, and resolving *śakti* is represented by the *kuṇḍalinī* or the coiled serpent-power. It is the body's (including the gross, subtle, and causal) supporting base and magazine of power. It is the central pivot upon which the whole complex apparatus of the physical body, vital economy, and mental activity (conscious and subconscious) moves and turns. The Jīva apparatus is a closed machine of a specific, determinate character, with its bodily, vital, and mental powers and functions limited and defined, because of the specific ratio in which *kuṇḍalinī* or static power in the apparatus stands with respect to the kinetic power actually working in and as that given apparatus. To change the working efficiency of that apparatus, physically, vitally, or mentally, is to change that ratio. A transformation, dynamization, and sublimation of the physical, vital, and mental apparatus is possible only by what is called the 'rousing of *kuṇḍalinī*' and her reorientation from 'downward facing' to 'upward facing'. By the former, the apparatus has become a 'closed curve', limited in character, restricted in functions and possibilities. It is a 'little knower, doer, and enjoyer'. By the latter, it breaks the *pāśa* and transcends its 'littleness'.

The actual *modus operandi* of the rousing process and of the 'piercing' of the *cakras*, or spheres or planes as we may call them, is a very vital mode of Tāntrika and, we may add, of every form of *sādhanā*. The essential thing is to make an ascent, from spheres or planes that are more and more veiled, closed, and limited, to others that are more and more 'conscious' (*cinmaya*), 'open', and unrestricted—that is, from the *aśuddha* to the *śuddha tattvas*. Three 'Gordian knots' (*granthis*) which bind the soul to the *prākṛta* or natural order have to be cut in making a successful ascent. They are the ties of the three *guṇas* famous in the literature of Indian philosophy. They are the three components of Nature's *élan* or impetus—what presents, what moves, and what veils—PMV as I have called them in Sir John Woodroffe's *Serpent*

Power. Perfect experience is unconditioned by the stress of PMV and, in this sense, is *guṇātīta* or beyond the natural *guṇas*. During its upward journey, the Jīva is not quite released from the natural frame till it reaches the sixth plane. Till then, it continues to possess, in a more and more refined, extended, and dynamized form, no doubt, the character of a centre in a certain type of *cakra* or sphere or universe. It has not yet reached *brahmarandhra* or the 'opening' for pure and perfect experience. In other words, the centre has not yet become the *bindu* or 'point', which the Śāstra mystically calls the 'perfect universe'. 'Point' is that at which the perfect experience is 'opened' to the centre, and the 'flow' is established. It is like making the limitless ocean flow into a 'little pond'. The little pond ceases to exist as such thereby; it becomes one with the limitless ocean. If we should call the limitless aspect 'continuum', then a centre or Jīva, after transcending the natural order of the component *guṇas*, becomes transformed into a new being (*pūrṇābhiṣikta*), which then presents a double phase, a point phase and a continuum phase. This is one meaning of the two-petalled sixth lotus where he then finds himself. From the *mantra* point of view, the phases are *bindu* and *nāda*. Below that he was still piercing the *a*, *u*, *m* components of the *praṇava* or *Om*. A psychological sublimation goes on *pari passu* with it. The sixth plane represents the coalesced ('like the two halves in a grain of gram') duality of *prakāśa* (illumination) and *vimarśa* (thought) which evolves into the the relation of subject-object.

The end to be achieved is the realization of both pure and perfect Consciousness-Being-Bliss. In the highest planer the pure *cit* of Advaita Vedānta is realised as the 'resplendent void'; nay, Śiva-Śakti 'in close embrace' in the abode of the 'thousand-petalled lotus' is also realized. That abode is the abode of wholeness and perfection. The Vaiṣṇava will realize his *yugala* Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in this abode of wholeness and perfection. And there can be perfect Bliss or *ānanda* only in such wholeness.

In the sixth plane the Jīva-centre, always under stress and strain, now expanding, now contracting (*sphurat-saṅkucat*), as nearly as possible approximates to the character of a perfect point or *bindu*, which means the state of infinite condensation and concentration and therefore of potency. Only by such an infinitely condensed potency can it pierce and gain access into the abode

of perfection said to be made of 'the purest *maṇi* or *vajra*'. Only the like will pierce the like. The infinitely great will open itself only to the infinitesimally great which is *bindu*. *Nāda*, in one aspect, is the continuum aspect of the 'point'. In physics, by the way, *bindu* may be represented by the quantum, and *nāda* by the wave-system.

The abode of perfection made of *maṇi* or *vajra* (that is, of imperishable, impenetrable essence) appears to open even to the point through a kind of 'sluice gate'. In course of the ascent, we have to reach and pass successively through certain 'critical' positions. Generally, whenever one *tattva* passes into another, critical values and positions have to be taken into account. Now, in the ascent we are describing, we have to pass successively from one kind of *tattva* to another. To pass a *tattva* is to become it, for each represents a stage of actual realization.

Now, at every crisis or critical position the aspirant or *sādhaka* requires and often gets what we may call ultra-ego-centric 'help', or 'extra-scheduled' power. He gets it from Mother *kuṇḍalinī* herself, in that vital and supremely important aspect of hers which is called *guruśakti*. But really critical positions must be reached so as to make this power available, responsive, and operative for the aspirant. In one sense, it is the aspect of divine grace; it is *kṛpā*. Grace descends whenever a real crisis comes or is coming. It then becomes patent and indispensable. Now, the sixth plane, or *ājñācakra* as it is called, is *par excellence* the place of *gurutattva*, which is to find the key of the last 'sluice gate' and open it for communion with perfect experience. It is the critical position *par excellence*, because here, more than any where before, the ego-centre must finally shed his 'ego', his very 'self'. The seed of *dvaita* must be burnt here. *Gurutattva* is thus the 'key' by which the power, which is as the limitless ocean, is switched on into the little reservoir which is the Jiva, filling the latter, making it overflow and cease to be the little reservoir. It is also the 'commutator' which reverses the ego-centric current, the current that imprisons. The place of *guru* and *dīkṣā* (initiation) is thus of vital importance, *Gurutattva* may, and often does, operate through a human body. But the Śāstra, seizing upon the kernel of the thing, forbids the *sādhaka* to look upon his *guru* as human. He is a form and embodiment of God-power.

CIT-ŚAKTI AND CID-VILĀSA

The *mantra* also must not be regarded as mere letter, and the image through which communion is established with God—who is the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the world, is infinitely manifested, and is also beyond name, thought, and speech—must not be regarded as stock and stone. If the worship is intelligently done, that is, with an understanding and appreciation of the principles, then *mantra*, *yantra* (symbolic diagram), the offerings, the procedure, and the paraphernalia of worship are all transformed into forms and expressions of *cit-śakti* and *cid-vilāsa*. The object involved is to effect the transformation of the articles and acts of ordinary experience which are the material, limited, and limiting factors, operative in certain narrow spheres of usage and convention, into forms of *cit-sattā* (being), *cit-aśkti* (power), and *cid-vilāsa* (*ānanda* and play). The *nyāsa*, *bhūtaśuddhi*, *prāṇāyāma*, *dhyāna*, *prāṇapratiṣṭhā*, and *mānasa* and *bāhya pūjā* are all calculated to effect this transformation of the worshipper, the worshipped, and the means and acts of worship into *cit* or *caitanya*, which they all are in their kernel; and thus, they culminate in realizing the essential identification in perfect experience of the principle of 'thou' (*tvam*) and the principle of 'that' (*tat*). The final result achieved is the same as in *kuṇḍalinī yoga*. In fact, the final result cannot be attained through *mantra*, *yantra*, and *pūjā* unless thereby *kuṇḍalinī* is roused, the ego-centric, blinding and binding current is reversed, ascent is made from the plane of *aśuddha* to that of the *śuddha tattvas*, and, finally, to pure and perfect experience itself. The *mantra yoga* or *japa* is a means of rousing *kuṇḍalinī*; so are *nyāsa*, *pūjā*, etc. with external or internal *yantras*, images, and symbols. The *bhakta* or the *jñānin*, sometimes, may not have consciously and deliberately to set himself about the business of rousing *kuṇḍalinī* and making her pierce the six *cakras*. But this does not mean that *kuṇḍalinī* can be 'let alone' by him. She *is*, and *must be*, roused by the power of *bhakti* or *jñāna*.

From the principles we have broadly explained, it will appear that *kuṇḍalinī yoga* is not a 'mystery' or esoteric doctrine and ritual peculiar to the Tantras. It is the basis of every *sādhanā* in every form. But there are different forms of effort or *sādhanā* by which this magazine of latent power can be acted upon, and power 'laid up' can be lifted as by a lever. *Viśvāsa* (faith) and

preman (love) do act as the most powerful lever. The Tantra fully recognizes this and uses it. It recognizes *yoga* and *jñāna* also. It recommends even music as *sura* or *nāda* Brahman. For the common aspirant, however, it serves out a mixed prescription of *karma*, *jñāna*, *yoga*, and *bhakti*, all 'scientifically' combined, graded and graduated, and regulated, according to verying conditions and needs.

TANTRA COMPARED WITH THE OBJECTIVE SCIENCES

In fact, Tantra may be aptly described as *sādhanā* reduced to a science, and *siddhi* or realization attained as an experimentally verified fact. For this, it is required that one should follow the lead of a guide who has tried the experiment before and 'seen' for himself.

The Tantras, though aiming at the realization of the supreme end, have also provided courses of discipline by which the so-called 'lower' ends of *artha* (wealth), *kāma* (desire), and *dharma* (virtue) are achieved. The spirit and attitude in which the subject, whether in the higher or in the lower phases, should be approached is precisely that in which one should investigate the problems of physical, biological, and psychological sciences, without prejudice, and with a settled resolve to experiment and see for oneself. There is no more sense in being frightened by *mantra*, *yantra*, etc. of the Tantra—the endless variety of the apparatus of ritualism suited to every sort of condition of time, place, and individual competence, than in being dismayed by the similarly complicated and elaborate 'ritualism' of modern experimental science. The 'proofs' are the essential thing. The Tantras claim to 'prove' that *mantra* is efficacious, that *yantra* is potent, that *devatās* and higher powers do exist, that *siddhis*, if and to the extent sought, do come, and that the aspirant rises through the *sādhanā* prescribed to higher and higher levels of perfection, till he becomes perfect Being-Consciousness-Bliss.

It has been said that the Tantras are a system of 'magic' and an elaborate process of 'auto-suggestion'. Such statements are true; and they are false. They are true if 'magic' and 'auto-suggestion' are deeply understood. The first is not opposed to religion, but is the science of religion, by which power in the higher planes is opened and made available for use to the finite centre, including the power to believe and love and worship.

The latter is to 'turn round' the self, so that it may be *en rapport* with the process of divine imagination (*kalpanā*) from which the universe arises and in which it subsists. If things come to exist and live by God's 'suggestion', they will come to exist and live by the suggestion of a *siddha* who 'lives, moves, and has his being' in divine Consciousness. The aspirant by self-purification, meditation, surrender, devotion, and intense, passionate seeking places himself *en rapport* with the grantor of all boons including the highest. Since the whole is involved at every 'point', contact and communion can be established with the whole at any point of the universe.

We began with *vāmācāra* which, owing partly to ignorance of the principles and partly to the prevalence of abuse, has made the whole science suspect. Such a method cannot be suited to every kind of competency. It is not for the *paśu* who moves with the outgoing current and earns merit or demerit while moving with it. He has not yet subdued desire and cut the three knots of 'hate, fear, and shame'. The *sādhaka* competent for the 'left' path is the *vīra* who has assailed *kuṇḍalinī* at her repose at the base root and made her turn and rise. He is competent to 'play with fire' and burn his bonds with it. But there is a final *divya-* and *mahābhāva* state in which bonds do not exist in substance, and so they do not require to be burnt, but the semblance or mere form of them is dissolved in the 'ocean of nectar' of *divyabhāva*.

The word '*tantra*' which is sometimes derived from the root *tan*, to spread, means a system, a method, a discipline. It is a system of acts on the physical, vital, and mental planes by which a centre of being can render itself an apparatus efficient for the purpose of encompassing the twofold end of *abhyudaya* (progress or uplift) and *niḥśreyasa* (the supreme Good).

We have already referred to the fact how Tantra has effected a mutually helpful and perfecting co-ordination of *karma*, *yoga*, *jñāna*, and *bhakti*. It has emphasized will and effort, yet self-surrender, mercy, and grace have their vital place and function; and it combines the systematized ritualism of *karma* with the inner purifying process of *yoga*; the purest Advaita *jñāna* with the purest *bhakti* and the most passionate yearning and love.

VII

TĀNTRIKA CULTURE AMONG THE BUDDHISTS

Benoytosh Bhattacharya

THE history of Tāntricism is highly interesting. We shall here make an attempt to trace this history, with special reference to Buddhism, from early times, and examine the circumstances which proved favourable to the development of this unique system of psychic culture in India.

Professor Chintaharan Chakravarti, in an admirable article in the *Indian Historical quarterly*,[1] has traced the references to Tāntrika practices in their earlier stages amongst the Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains. These references in ancient literature show that some of the rudimentary Tāntrika practices are as old as the time of the *Ṛg-Veda*, and the *Atharva-Veda* is full of them. In Buddhism such practices were found in abundance, and from references in early Buddhist literature it can be seen that many varieties of Tāntrika practices were then in vogue. The attitude of Buddhism seems to have been hostile to such practices; but there are many references to show that some of the mystic practices of the harmless sort were definitely tolerated, nay, encouraged. References to Tāntrika practices are also available in the earliest Jaina literature. Thus, it is clear that the ground was well prepared for the development of a mystic science like Tāntricism.

ORIGIN OF BUDDHIST TĀNTRICISM

It appears very probable that Tāntricism received a great impetus from Buddhism. Buddha recognized the *ṛddhis* or supernatural powers and mentioned four *iddhipādas*[2] conducive to the attainment of supernatural powers. He himself practised the *āsphānaka-yoga*[3] (*yoga* of psychic expansion) when he was in

[1] 'Antiquity of Tāntrikism', VI. pp. 114 ff.

[2] They are: *chando* (will), *viriyam* (effort), *cittam* (thought), and *vīmaṁsā* (investigation). See R. C. Childers, *Dictionary of the Pali Language*, p. 157.

[3] *Lalitavistara*, edited by Rajendralal Mitra, p. 315.

search of the eternal Truth. In the *Vinaya Piṭaka*,[4] we hear stories of Buddha's own disciple Bharadvāja rising up into the air miraculously and bringing down the begging bowl which was held high above by a Seṭṭhi. Buddha is said to have expressed his great disapprobation of this wanton display of supernatural power on the part of his disciple. The question arises how the disciple acquired this miraculous power, unless it was from his own teacher.

While investigating the circumstances which made the Tāntrika practices popular, we should take into consideration the part played by monasticism (*sannyāsa*) as developed in Buddhism. In early Hinduism, the life of renunciation, as we know, was open only to the Brāhmaṇas, and this must have been greatly resented by the masses. In Buddhism, *sannyāsa* was open to all, and in this respect, as indeed in many others, Buddhism was a challenge to Hinduism. In early Hinduism, *sannyāsa* was generally recommended for those who had already passed through the stages of *brahmacarya* (student's life), *gārhasthya* (householder's life), and *vānaprastha* (forest life).[5] But there were a few dissentients among the Hindus also, who advocated that the monastic vow could be taken by a Brāhmaṇa belonging to any of the above three stages, provided he had a keen sense of dispassion. The *Jābāla Upaniṣad* is particularly interested in this new doctrine. We do not know to what extent Jābāla's words may be taken as authority in the matter of taking *sannyāsa*, and how far his doctrines were respected in ancient times. But it is certain that Buddhism went a step further and promulgated that *sannyāsa* could be taken by any one, whether a Brāhmaṇa or not, belonging to any order of life, provided his mind was bent on obtaining *nirvāṇa*.

The preaching of Buddhism slackened many restrictions prevalent in Hinduism regarding the caste system and four orders of life, and there is no doubt that the system introduced by Buddha became very popular. But he was very strict about the rules of morality to be followed by his disciples, especially those living in monasteries; and any violation of them was severely dealt with. He did not permit the use of fish, meat, wine, association with the opposite sex, etc. on the part of the monks. The

[4] *Sacred Books of the East*, XX. pp. 78 f.

[5] *Sannyāsa Upaniṣad*, II. 13.

latter, however, were not disciplined enough to be able to follow his strict injunctions with regard to these matters, because many of them embraced the monastic life without adequate preparation for it. The result was that, even during the lifetime of Buddha, many monks revolted against his injunctions, and he, being sorely perturbed by their unruly conduct, drove them out of the order.[6]

There were many others who were not bold enough to proclaim a war against the rules imposed on them, but violated them in secret. It is thus very natural to expect that there arose secret conclaves of Buddhists who, though professing to be monks, violated all rules of morality and secretly practised things that were considered by others to be revolting. After the death of Buddha, such secret conclaves must have grown in number in every province, until they formed into a big organization. If we add to this the *yoga* practices and the practice of *mantras*, we get a picture of the Tāntrika cult at its early stage.

From what has been said above, it is easy to conceive that Tāntricism was a natural growth among the Buddhists, because the circumstances were most favourable for this. Hinduism also had a primitive kind of magic in the form of rituals and ceremonies, but there was no need to practise them in secret. The Brāhmaṇa could take to the monastic life in the usual course, and if he so desired, he could practise *yoga* and *haṭhayoga*. And as he could enter the fourth stage of life after completing his experiences in the three previous stages, he had no more longing for objects of enjoyment. Endowed with a great control over his senses and thoughts, he was fully qualified for the monastic life, and no harm could be expected from people of his type when in the monastic order. The risk was much greater in Buddhism, because the opening up of the monastic life to all and sundry was not safe for those who had not gone through all the experiences of life.

THE GUHYASAMĀJAS OR SECRET CONCLAVES

The secret conclaves that grew on the ruins of the monastic order, as conceived and established by Buddha, developed in

[6] For details and references, see Bhattacharyya. *An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism*, pp. 22 f.

course of time into big organizations known as Guhyasamājas. Their teachings and practices, however, were not sanctioned in Buddhism; so they had to practise their rituals in secret (*guhya*). But they were not slow to find out means of obtaining this sanction, without which they were in an unenviable position. As Buddhists they were outcastes, and they could not enter into the Hindu fold; their secret practices would have served as a deterrent to their being incorporated in the Hindu fold, if such an attempt had been made.

The other alternative for the followers of the Guhyasamāja was to introduce their doctrines into Buddhism by the composition of a new *Saṅgīti* or collection of verses, all of which were to be taken to have been delivered by Buddha in an assembly of the faithful. Thus the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* was composed in the *Saṅgīti* form, and in it reasons were given why the teachings of this book were kept secret so long, and why there could not be any objection for practising, by a devout Buddhist, all that was enjoined in the Tantra, together with details of theories and practices, dogmas and rituals. Before we give an account of the innovations introduced by this Tantra, it is necessary to give some idea of the age in which it was written.[7]

Tāranātha is inclined to believe that the Tantras and Tāntrika ideas of a secret nature were as old as the time of the great Buddhist teacher Nāgārjuna, who is to be distinguished from the Tāntrika teacher of the same name who flourished much later in the seventh century. Tāranātha also says that when the Tantras were handed down from *gurus* to disciples secretly for nearly three hundred years, they got publicity through the mystic teachings, songs, and miracles of the Siddhas, Nāthas, and Yogīs. It has been found out by subsequent research that the testimony of Tāranātha is materially correct. The doctrines of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* are substantially the same as those found in the *sādhanā* (practice) of the *Prajñāpāramitā* composed by Asaṅga, the elder brother of Vasubandhu, who flourished in the third or, according to some, in the fourth century A.D. Moreover, the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* seems to have exploited the materials supplied by an earlier work, the *Mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa*, and thus it is dependent on the doctrines of the latter, which it subsequently developed

[7] For a detailed discussion on the subject, see *Guhyasamāja Tantra* (Gaekwad's Oriental Series, No. 53), Introduction, pp. xxxii f.

and modified. The *Mūlakalpa*, again, is a difficult work to understand, because to a careful observer it presents a mass of subsequent additions in the same way as some of the Purāṇas do. The work, it appears, originally consisted of twenty-eight chapters or even less, and later on had fifty five chapters, and in this form it is published by the Trivandrum Sanskrit Series. It had twenty-eight chapters when it was translated into Chinese in the beginning of the eleventh century. All the subsequent chapters were added after that date, but before the time when the present manuscript was written. Amongst these additions, there is a portion which gives the history of India with the names of kings and other famous personages in enigmatical language. The names of kings and others are generally mentioned with the initial letters, which make the understanding the identification extremely difficult.

The *Mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa* in its earliest part is a Mantrayāna work, which gives discriptions of deities, *mudrās* (poses), and *maṇḍalas* (diagrams), and of the processes by which the worshipper should proceed to offer prayers and perform the rituals. It therefore appears to be a compendium of earlier literature on the subject, which is now lost, because the worship is fairly elaborate and worked out with scientific regularity. This development is scarcely possible without a previous literature behind it. The *Mūlakalpa*, being the source on which the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* is based, should be earlier than the Tantra itself, which, being similar to the doctrines of Asaṅga, must belong to the third or the fourth century.

The *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, under the circumstances, appears to be clearly a product of the third century, and the *Mūlakalpa* of the second or the first century A.D. We can now proceed to state what it introduced into Buddhism, and how it may be considered a landmark in the system of Buddhist thought as well as in the history of the evolution of the Tāntrika culture.

INNOVATIONS BY THE GUHYASAMĀJA TANTRA

Amongst the innovations introduced by the book, the most important seems to be the declaration that emancipation does not depend on bodily sufferings and abstinence from all worldly enjoyments. In fact, the work definitely lays down that perfection cannot be obtained through processes which are difficult and

painful, but only through the satisfaction of all desires.[8] Its teaching in this respect is direct and unequivocal.

In earlier days, the rules and regulations prescribed for a follower of Hīnayāna and of Mahāyāna were unduly sever, involving as they did much hardship and great bodily sufferings. Even then, the attainment of Buddhahood meant an inordinately long time or even many births. It was thus a great relief to learn from the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* that it had a new process by which Buddhahood could be attained within the shortest time possible, and even in one birth by indulging in all objects of enjoyment.

Another element which the book introduced into Buddhism is that of Śakti (woman, considered as a manifestation of divine energy), particularly for obtaining emancipation through *yoga* and *samādhi* (highest concentration). In the very opening chapter of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, the Lord transforms Himself in the form of five Dhyānī Buddhas (Buddhas in meditative pose) and associates each of them with a Śakti. Moreover, in the eighteenth chapter,[9] while describing the different ceremonies in connection with initiation, mention is made of *prajñābhiṣeka* or the initiation of the disciple with *prajñā* or a Śakti. There it is said that the preceptor should take the hand of the Śakti, who is beautiful, agreeable to the disciple, and an adept in the practice of *yoga*, and place it on the hand of the disciple after citing the Tathāgatas as witnesses. Then, after placing his own hand on the head of the disciple, he should say that, as Buddhahood is impossible of attainment by any other means, this *vidyā* (Śakti) should be accepted. The worldly phenomena, though non-dual in essence, appear to be dual outwardly. Therefore he should never abandon her in life. This is what is known as the *vidyāvrata* or the vow of *vidyā*, and any one who disregards this cannot obtain perfection of the *uttama* (highest) kind.

This introduction of Śakti in Tāntrika worship, made for the first time in the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, is one of the most important events in the history of Tāntricism. In fact, the Tantras have to be divided into two broad divisions on the basis of Śakti, namely, those that are free from the element of Śakti and those that advocate her worship. In the course of my studies, I have not met with a single reliable reference to the element of Śakti in

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 161.

works that are supposed to be anterior to the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*. In this connection, it should be remembered that the Buddhist Tantras were divided into four classes for four different types of disciples, as it were, namely, (1) the Caryā Tantra, (2) the Kriyā Tantra, (3) the Yoga Tantra, and (4) the Anuttarayoga Tantra. Out of these four, the first two are preparatory and are not given the element of Śakti, which is prescribed for the last two classes, regarded as higher in the scale of perfection.[10]

DHYĀNI BUDDHAS

Another new idea that was introduced by the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* is the theory of the five Dhyānī Buddhas presiding over the five *skandhas* or elements of which the universe is composed.[11] The five *skandhas*, as promulgated by Buddha, are *rūpa* (form), *vedanā* (feeling), *saṁjñā* (perception), *samskāra* (impression), and *vijñāna* (ego-consciousness); and these five, according to the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, were presided over by the five Dhyānī Buddhas, viz. Vairocana, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi, and Akṣobhya, respectively. The Dhyānī Buddhas, like the *skandhas*, were considered eternal, and they manifested themselves without passing through the intermediate stage of a Bodhisattva, or in other words, without depending on others for their origin. The *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, to make the scheme perfect, gave each of the Dhyānī Buddhas a Śakti and mentioned their *sādhanā* (method of worship) in a magic circle.

This introduction of the Dhyānī Buddhas may be considered to be a landmark in the evolution of the Tāntrika culture among the Buddhists. Reference to them is not found in any work that is written before the third century; but as this was one of the most important theories in Tantra, frequent mention of it is made in all later Tantra works. From this arose the various cults associated with the Vajrayāna; and Buddhists were divided according to the relative importance given to one or other of the Dhyānī Buddhas, who were known as the progenitors of so many families, as it were. From the Dhyānī Buddhas and their Śaktis

[10] For the discipline enjoined on the disciples belonging to these schools,' see *Sādhanamālā* (Gaekwad's Oriental Series, No. 41), II, Introduction, pp. lxiv f.

[11] *Guhyasamāja Tantra* (Gaekwad's Oriental Series), p. 137.

arose their families of Bodhisattvas and Buddhaśaktis, and these, when represented in art, are required to show their origin by holding on their heads a miniature figure of the Dhyānī Buddha to whose family they belong.

When we investigate the origin of the Dhyānī Buddhas, according to the conceptions of the Guhyasamāja school, we find in the *Saṅgīti* that a single power called Kāya-vāk-citta-vajradhara, that is, the holder of the *vajra* consisting of the three elements *kāya* (body), *vāc* (speech), and *citta* (mind)—the embodiment of Buddha—manifests itself in the form of the five Dhyānī Buddhas, their Śaktis, and so on. That is to say, the five Dhyānī Buddhas are nothing but the manifestations of one single power. This power, at other places in the same work, is described as the embodiment of *śūnya* or *vajra*, from which the name of the school Vajrayāna is derived. The power of *śūnya*, according to the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, is expressed by the three eternal things, namely, body, speech, and consciousness, which are the three attributes of all human beings. It is said in the opening chapter that Kāya-vāk-citta-vajradhara, at the request of the members of the assembly, sat in different *samādhis* and uttered certain syllables, and the Dhyānī Buddhas were accordingly brought forth into existence. The order of creation, under the circumstances, seems to be first the eternal *śūnya*, from which evolved the three elements, *kāya*, *vāc*, and *citta*, and from them again the five Dhyānī Buddhas or the five *skandhas*. This is a curious mixture of philosophy, mysticism, and materialism; and thus, as a logical system of philosophy, the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* appears to be crude.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOCIAL RESTRICTIONS

The description of this *Guhyasamāja Tantra* will not be complete if we omit to mention its preaching against the disciplinary methods enjoined by Buddha. Fish, flesh, wine, etc. were rarely permitted in the original Buddhism. But this book sanctions everything. Not only flesh of the most harmless kind, but all kinds of it, including human flesh, are permitted. Blood of all animals and wine of any quality could be taken by a follower of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*.[12]

[12] *Ibid.*, Introduction, p. xii.

Moreover, the work has no respect for such objects of reverence, advocated in the earlier stages of Buddhism, as were useless. In one place, it definitely forbids its followers to erect *caityas* (temples), to repeat the sacred works of Buddhism, to draw magic circles, or to offer articles of worship to the Three Jewels.[13] For a *yogin* such things have no real existence, and are therefore considered redundant. Further, the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* asks its followers to disregard all social laws. It lays down: 'You should freely immolate animals, utter any number of falsehoods, take things which do not belong to you, and even commit adultery.'[14]

The above will appear to be revolting to any one who is not initiated in the doctrine of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*. Whether many of the terms used in the Tantra itself have any symbolic meaning, which is quite different from what appears on the surface, remains yet to be seen. Apart from this, it should be remembered that the book talks of mystic matters on the strength of experiences gained from actual practice, and these cannot be the same as those of ordinary human beings who are bound down by all kinds of conventional laws. To the *yogin* who has grasped the real truth, who has realized the *śūnya*, the whole world appears as a drama without a substance behind. Before him the duality of the world disappears, and all things are as appearances. He cannot therefore have any respect for objects of general reverence, or feel hatred towards any object treated with disdain by ordinary mortals. He does not feel himself bound by any laws, social or other, which are mostly the creations of imperfect beings, because it is one with the ultimate Reality that creates, maintains, and destroys everything, and views the imperfect world from the standpoint of the *śūnya*, or the ultimate creative energy.

THE VAJRAYĀNA

It is also noteworthy that the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* not only gave instructions for attaining salvation, but also satisfied the popular needs by prescribing a number of *mantras* (charms), *mudrās* (mystic signs), *maṇḍalas* (circles of deities), and so forth, and by showing the way of attaining success in all normal human activities, including victory over rivals by miraculous means.

[13] Buddha, Dharma (the religion), and Saṅgha (the order); *ibid.*, p. 142.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 120.

Thus, it showed how to conquer armies of invading kings, obtain wealth, and attain various kinds of *siddhis* (supernatural powers). The lay followers were more interested in these matters than in emancipation, even though it was declared to be easily accessible.[15] The book thus combined in one sweep all forms of mysticism in its system, such as *yoga* and *haṭhayoga*, mystic poses, diagrams and formulae, Dhyānī Buddhas, deities, the six cruel rites,[16] and a host of other rituals. This system thus developed into a form of Tāntricism, which was named Vajrayāna or the Vajra path to salvation. It was called Vajrayāna, because *śūnya* came to be designated by the term *vajra* on account of its indestructibility. The *śūnya* of the Vajrayāna is something different from the *śūnya* of the Mādhyamikas (nihilists) or the Vijñānavādins (idealists), because it includes the three elements *śūnya* (reality) *vijñāna* (consciousness), and *mahāsukha* (great bliss).

OPPOSITION TO VAJRAYĀNA PRACTICES

Whether the novel teachings of the Guhyasamāja school met with general approval remains to be seen. It says that when Buddha came to the world as Dīpaṅkara and Kāśyapa, he did not preach these secret doctrines, because people in those days were not found fit to receive the instructions.[17] Now that they have become fit to receive initiation into the mystic cult as set forth in the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, the teachings are made public. But if this book is examined carefully, it will be seen that the teachings were opposed even when the work was first revealed. In the fifth chapter, the Lord declares in the assembly that emancipation through the Vajrayāna is possible of attainment for all men, howsoever vicious, cruel, or immoral they may be. Nay, even incestuous persons are not ill-fitted for emancipation in this branch of the Mahāyāna. When he had just finished his speech, there was a great consternation in the assembly, and volleys of protests came from the Bodhisattvas. They said, 'Why, O Lord, the master of the Tathāgatas, are you having recourse to these sinful utterances in a respectable assembly full of the

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 144.

[16] The six cruel rites mentioned in the Tantras are generally enumerated as *śānti* (propitiation), *vasīkaraṇa* (controlling), *stambhana* (transfixion), *vidveṣaṇa* (separation), *māraṇa* (killing), and *uccāṭana* (destruction).

[17] *Guhyasamāja Tantra* (Gaekwad's Oriental Series), p. 144.

Tathāgatas?'[18] The Lord expressed great surprise at this and said, 'O Kulaputras, do not speak thus. The conduct I have just mentioned is known as the *bodhi* conduct, which is immutable and pure, and is considered as such by the Buddhas who have realized the true essence, and which springs from the interpretation of the essential truth'. The moment these words were uttered, all the Bodhisattvas in the assembly became frightened and confused, and fell down senseless. The Tathāgatas, who could realize the truth of the assertions of the Lord, remained unaffected and requested the Lord to revive the Bodhisattvas, who could not realize the truth owing to their ignorance. The Lord thereupon sat in a special meditation, and when the rays issuing out of his person touched the unconscious Bodhisattvas, they all revived, sat in their respective places, and recited several *gāthās* (verses) in praise of the Lord. This shows that there was a considerable opposition to the teachings of the book, which people were not prepared to accept in their entirety; and this may be another reason why this Tantra had to be kept in secret for several centuries before its teachings could be extensively made known.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE VAJRAYĀNA

The Vajrayāna made many contributions to Buddhism and Buddhist culture in general, and thus became very attractive. The Hindus were also impressed by its grandeur, and were induced to accept some of the Tāntrika doctrines, deities, *mantras*, *sādhanās*, etc. Not only did the Vajrayāna introduce elements of *yoga* into ordinary worship, but it also gave a regular system of *mantras*, which could be used for all possible purposes even by a householder. The exquisite are that the Vajrayāna developed did not fail to create a good impression, and the Buddhist art of that period may be considered to be its great contribution to Indian culture. There is no doubt that the Tantras assumed importance in the Pāla period, when even the universities like those of Nālandā and Vikramaśila had to introduce them into their curriculum, and keep regular professors to hold classes for those who wanted to have a higher education in the Tantras, in their four subdivisions mentioned before.

It will not be an exaggeration to say that Nāthism derived its

[18] *Ibid.*, Introduction, pp. xxii f. where this incident is described more fully.

inspiration from the Vajrayāna; or, in other words, the progenitors of the Nātha school Hinduized the teachings of the Buddhist Tantras. From the existing literature of the Hindus, no reference to Tāntricism can be found which may be placed before the third century when the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* was composed. The Nāthas were originally nine in number, and they are sometimes included in the list of the eighty-four Siddhas of the Buddhists. The Nāthas and their descendants are known in Bengal as the Yogīs or Yugīs. Regarding their origin and their present low status in Hindu society, many stories are current; but it appears that they were the first to follow the Tāntrika practices amongst the Hindus, and were mainly the disciples of the Buddhists, who were not looked upon with great favour by the Hindus. The affinity of the Nāthas with the Buddhist Tāntrikas and their practice of the Tantras were probably the reasons why the Yogīs were regarded, in subsequent times, as 'untouchables'.

It will, however, be a mistake to think that the Nātha school was substantially the same as the Tāntrika school of the Buddhists. The Nāthas introduced many new theories in the sphere of *haṭhayoga* and *yoga*. In details of yogic practices, these theories were different from those advocated in the Tantras.[19] Very little is known about the Nāthas and their practices, because of scanty literature on the subject. Some Sanskrit works such as the *Gorakṣa Saṁhitā*, *Gorakṣa-śataka*, *Haṭhayoga-pradīpikā*, *Śiva Saṁhitā*, *Gheraṇḍa Saṁhitā*, and *Siddha-siddhānta-saṅgraha* are at present our only authentic materials to construct the history and practice of Nāthism. The Nāthas believed that the microcosm is a reflex of the macrocosm, and that everything that is found in creation has a parallel in the body. In this respect, Nāthism has a curious resemblance to the Sahajayāna as well as to the Kālacakrayāna.

THE SPREAD OF THE VAJRAYĀNA

The Vajrayāna, as we have already pointed out, is a product of the third century A.D. But its teachings did not get sufficient publicity in the first three hundred years of its inception. It was during the middle of the seventh century that, through the teachings and mystic songs of the eightyfour Siddhas, the Vajrayāna became popular, and its doctrines got wide publicity. The

[19] See Gopinath Kaviraj, *Siddha-siddhānta-saṅgraha* (Prince of Wales Saraswati Bhavana Texts, No. 13), Introduction.

Vajrayāna travelled to Nepal and Tibet, and Tāntrika works were translated into Tibetan. Some of the works also travelled to China, as we know from their translations now found in the Chinese Tripiṭaka. Thousands of works were written on a variety of subjects connected with the Vajrayāna, such as *yoga*, *mantras*, Tantras, practices, and hymns; and before the Mohammedans came, it was a great living religion. The Hindus took materials from the Buddhist Tantras and incorporated many of the practices in their religion and, thus, the Tāntrika culture reached its highest point.

The Vajrayāna also gave rise to several later Yānas (paths), such as the Sahajayāna, Kālacakrayāna, and Mantrayāna. We shall briefly notice here the most important teachings of these. All these later Yānas, however, may be considered to be mere offshoots of the Vajrayāna school, without differing materially from the original Yāna of the Guhyasamāja.

THE SAHAJAYĀNA

The Sahajayāna is believed to start with Lakṣmīṅkarā Devī (A.D. 729),[20] the sister of King Indrabhūti who styles himself the king of Uḍḍiyāna. The newness of Lakṣmīṅkarā's teachings consists in her declaration that no suffering, fasting, rites, bathing, purification, or obedience to the rules of society are necessary for the purpose of obtaining emancipation. According to her, it is not necessary to bow down before the images of gods which are made of wood, stone, or mud, but the worshipper should, with concentration, offer worship only to his own body where all gods reside. Lakṣmīṅkarā preached that when truth is known, there is no restriction of any kind for the worshipper. Like her brother Indrabhūti, she did not believe in restrictions regarding food or drink, and advocated Śaktiworship. The Sahajayāna thus belonged to the Yoga Tantra class.

THE KĀLACAKRAYĀNA

The Kālacakrayāna seems to be a later development of the Vajrayāna. This concerns itself with the Yoga Tantra and Anuttarayoga Tantra, and incorporates the doctrines of the Sahajayāna

[20] For authorities, quotations, and references, see Bhattacharyya, *op. cit.*, pp. 76 f.

also. Waddell does not seem to have a true conception of the grand system of the Kālacakrayāna, as will appear from his naive statement about this system in his *Lamaism*:[21] 'In the tenth century A.D., the Tāntric phase developed in northern India, Kashmir, and Nepal into the monstrous and polydemonist doctrine, the Kālacakra, with its demoniacal Buddhas, which incorporated the Mantrayāna practices and called itself the Vajrayāna or "the Thunderbolt Vehicle", and its followers were named Vajrācāryas or "Followers of the Thunderbolt".'

But the *Kālacakra Tantra* and its commentary, *Vimalaprabhā*, tell a different tale. According to the latter, Kālacakra is a deity and an embodiment of *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā* (compassion), is embraced by the goddess Prajñā, and represents the philosophical conception of *advaya* or nonduality. He is regarded as the Ādibuddha or the progenitor even of the Buddhas, that is to say, the Dhyānī Buddhas. The passage, 'one's own body, in which the whole world is manifest', has a curious resemblance to the doctrines of the Sahajayāna and Nāthism,[22] and this makes it probable that Kālacakrayāna embodied in it the teachings of the Vajrayāna, Nāthism, and Sahajayāna and, thus, in historical evolution, seems to be later than all the three. As a school, it started in the tenth century.

The deity Kālacakra, like many other Vajrayāna deities, is fierce in appearance and is embraced by the Śakti, which shows that the Yāna is merely a branch of the Vajrayāna in its higher forms of Yoga and Anuttarayoga Tantras. The *maṇḍala* (circle) of the deity, as we understand from the *Kālacakra Tantra*, consists of all the planets and stars, and the book itself deals with many topics connected with astronomy and astrology, on which it lays great stress. The central deity, as the name Kālacakra indicates, represents the circle of time and is surrounded by such minor deities as would indicate time. The introduction of the *Kālacakra Tantra* is attributed to Mañjuśrī, and the commentary, *Vimalaprabhā*, was written in 12,000 *granthas* by one Puṇḍarīka.[23]

[21] *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism*, p. 15.

[22] See the description of the *Laghu-kālacakra-tantra-rāja-Ṭīkā* given by Mm. Haraprasad Shastri in *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Government Collection* (Asiatic Society of Bengal), I, pp. 73 f.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

THE MANTRAYĀNA

The school called Mantrayāna or the 'Spell Vehicle', as styled by Waddell, originated, according to Tibetan traditions, with Nāgrārjuna, who is alleged to have received it from the celestial Buddha Vairocana, through the divine Bodhisattva Bajrasattva, at the iron tower in southern India.[24] The Mantrayāna, strictly speaking, concerns itself with *mantras* and *yantras* or magic circles, and, incidentally, it includes such things as *dhāraṇīs* (memorized prayers), *mālā mantras* (garland of charms), *hṛdaya mantras* (short charms), etc. It believes that certain special mystic forces are generated by reciting words of a certain combination, pronounced in a certain manner, and that, with the help of these mystic forces, the worshipper can obtain whatever he desires, such as wealth, victory, *siddhis*, and even emancipation. The *yantras* are included in the same system, because the magic circles are not supposed to bestow any power unless the letters of the appropriate *mantra* are placed in their appropriate places in the magic circle.

It is very difficult to say when the system originated. *Mantras* and *dhāraṇīs* existed from very early times in Buddhism; but they were elevated to a system very probably at the time mentioned in the Tibetan tradition. The *Mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa* is full of *mantras*, *maṇḍalas*, and *dhāraṇīs*. Similarly the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* and the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* are also full of them, and since, as we have shown above, these are products of the second or third century, there is no wonder that the Mantrayāna, as a school, should be as old as the time of Nāgārjuna who flourished in the second century A.D.

[24] Waddell, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

VIII

THE CULT OF THE BUDDHIST SIDDHĀCĀRYAS

P. C. Bagchi

THE idea of *siddhi*, psychic and supernatural power, is universal in Indian religious systems. Almost all sects attach great importance to *yoga* in some form or other, and it is believed that the practice of *yoga* yields these powers. The Buddhist texts speak of ten kinds of powers (*iddhi*, *ṛddhi*, or *abhijñā*), such as 'to project mind-made image of oneself, to become invisible, to pass through solid things, such as wall, to penetrate solid ground as if it were water, to walk on water, to fly through the air, to touch sun and moon, to ascend into the highest heavens', etc.[1] The Brāhmaṇical texts speak of eight *siddhis*, such as *aṇiman*, *laghiman*, *mahiman* (powers of becoming minute, light, and vast at will), *prākāmya*, *prāpti* (powers of possessing irresistible will and obtaining anything desired), *vaśitva*, *īśitva* (subjugating all and establishing one's own superiority over others), and *kāmā-vasāyitva* (having perfect control over or suppression of all desires). They signify more or less the same powers as mentioned in the Buddhist texts in more general terms. The texts sometimes mention the same powers under the term *siddhi*, which is also explained as *ṛddhi*. A *siddha* is one who possesses these powers.

As the attainment of *siddhi* was a difficult task, there were special mystic schools which were concerned with such practices. There is mention of such schools as Siddhakaula, Siddhāmṛta, etc. as well as of Siddhas who were responsible for building up those schools.[2] One of the standard Brāhmaṇical Tantras, the *Lalitā-sahasranāma*, speaks of three traditions of spiritual lore—*divya*, *mānava*, and *siddha*. Although there is much about *siddhi* and Siddha in the Brāhmaṇical Tantras, we do not find in them

[1] Rhys Davids and Stede, *Pali Dictionary*, under '*Iddhi*'.

[2] P. C. Bagchi, *Kaulajñāna-nirṇaya* (Calcutta Sanskrit Series, No. III), Introduction, pp. 33-34.

any coherent theory on the Siddhas or any attempt at synthesis of the various doctrines attributed to them.

THE EIGHTY-FOUR BUDDHIST SIDDHAS

The Buddhist mystic schools which flourished between the eighth and twelfth centuries developed a very systematic theory on the Siddhas. This theory was also accepted, in later times, by the mediaeval religious sects, such as the Kabīr Pantha, Nātha Pantha, etc. According to this theory, there were eighty-four Siddhas, all human teachers, who had attained powers through the practice of *yoga*. The *Varṇaratnākara* of Jyotirīśvara (fourteenth century) mentions the eighty-four Siddhas. The Tibetan sources also mention them and give a systematic biographical sketch of all the Siddhas. The sources must have derived their information from Indian texts which are now lost. The names of the Siddhas in the *Varṇaratnākara* and in the Tibetan texts are not always the same, but as the agreement between them is very large, it may be said that the differences are due to copyists' mistakes. Eighty-four Siddhas are also referred to by Kabīr in one of his songs.[3] The names of the eighty-four Siddhas, according to the Tibetan tradition, are the following:

(1) Lūhi-pā, (2) Līlā-pā, (3) Virū-pā, (4) Dombi-pā, (5) Śābara (Śabari-pā), (6) Saraha (Rāhulabhadra), (7) Kaṅkāli, (8) Mīna, (9) Gorakṣa, (10) Cauraṅgī, (11) Viṇā, (12) Śānti, (13) Tanti, (14) Carmari, (15) Khaḍga, (16) Nāgārjuna, (17) Kāṇha-pā, (18) Kaṇarī (Āryadeva), (19) Thagana, (20) Nāḍa-pāda, (21) Śāli-pā (Śṛgāla-pāda), (22) Tilo-pā (Tailika-pāda), (23) Chatra, (24) Bhadra, (25) Dvikhaṇḍī (26) Ajogi, (27) Kaḍa-pāda, (28) Dhovī, (29) Kaṅkaṇa, (30) Kambala, (31) Teṅki, (32) Bhāde, (33) Tandhī, (34) Kukkuri, (35) Cujbi (Kusūli), (36) Dharma, (37) Mahī, (38) Acintya, (39) Babhahi, (40) Nalina, (41) Bhusuku, (42) Indrabhūti, (43) Megha-pāda, (44) Kuṭharī (45) Karmāra, (46) Jālandhari, (47) Rāhula, (48) Garbharī, (49) Dhakari, (50) Medinī, (51) Paṅkaja, (52) Ghaṇṭā, (53) Yogī, (54) Celuka, (55) Vāguri (Guṇḍarī?), (56) Luñcaka, (57) Nirguṇa, (58) Jayānanda, (59) Carṣaṭī, (60) Campaka, (61) Viṣaṇa (62) Bhali (Telī, Tailī), (63) Kumari, (64) Cārpaṭi, (65) Maṇibhadrā, (66) Mekhalā, (67) Maṅkhalā, (68) Kalakala, (69) Kanthaḍi, (70) Dauḍi,

[3] *Kabir granthamāla* (Nagari Pracharini Sabha Edition), p. 54.

(71) Udhali, (72) Kapāla, (73) Kila, (74) Puṣkara, (75) Sarvabhakṣa, (76) Nāgabodhi, (77) Dārika, (78) Puttalī, (79) Panaha, (80) Kokilā, (81) Anaṅga, (82) Lakṣmīṅkarā, (83) Sāmudra, (84) Bhali-pā.

HISTORICITY OF THE SIDDHAS

It has been argued by some scholars that this list of eighty-four Siddhas has no historical value. It has been suggested that, on account of the mystic implication of the number eighty-four, it has been taken as the basis of a theory of enumeration. The names, whether fictitious or historical, have been put together to make up a list of eighty-four. In support of this explanation, it has been pointed out that in the Buddhist texts there is mention of eighty-four lacs of *yonis*, eighty-four thousand *dammakhandas*, eighty-four thousand *stūpas*, etc. But, then, nowhere in these is there mention of simply eighty-four. It is therefore a far-fetched explanation to establish the mystic value of the number eighty-four. The list of the Siddhas, as it is, contains some names which seem to be wrong, or merely repetitions of other names under different forms (for example, Tanti and Tandhī seem to be the same name; Tilo or Tailika and Telī or Tailī are the same; Bhadra and Bhāde are the same; some names such as Babhahi, Nalina, Kalakala, etc. are not known from any other source). But, as it has already been said, the list is not perfect; there are mistakes either due to the copyists or to a bad state of preservation of the source-books. If we had various independent lists, it would have been easy to establish a correct one. It is not therefore proper to dismiss the number as of mystic implication. We simply do not know why the number is eighty-four and not anything else.

WORKS OF THE SIDDHAS

On the contrary, we know that most of the teachers mentioned in the list were historical personages, known in the Buddhist Church of those days either for their learning or for their spiritual attainments. They had composed texts or written mystic songs which have been preserved partially in original and mostly in Tibetan translations. The songs of the following are preserved in the collection called *Caryācarya-viniścaya* (correct name being

Caryāścarya-viniścaya or *Caryāgītikośa*:[4] Āryadeva (Kāṇarī), Bhāde, Bhusuku, Dārika, Dharma, Ḍombi, Guṇḍarī, Jayānanda, Jālandhara (Jālandharī), Kambala, Kukkuri, Kaṅkaṇa, Luyī (Lūhi), Mahī (dhara), Sānti, Sābara, Tanti, Teṇṭana, and Vīṇā. Two others, Kṛṣṇa (Kāṇhu or Kāṇha) and Saraha, are known not only from the *caryā* songs, but also from their *Dohākośas*.[5] Tilo-pā is known from one of his *Dohākośas* and Nāḍa-pāda from his commentary on the *Sekoddeśa*.[6]

Besides these original works, there are Tibetan translations of works, now lost, but originally written by a host of other Siddhas mentioned in the list. The translations are preserved in the *Bstan-hgyur* (Tanjur), Volumes XLVII and XLVIII. Volume XLVII contains the works of Indrabhuti Keralī-pāda, Aja Mahāsukha, Saraha, Mahāśabara, Nāro-pā (Nāḍa-pāda), Āryadeva, Kṛṣṇa-pāda, Virū-pā, Karma-pāda, and Tilo-pā. Volume XLVIII contains the works of Śāntideva, Luyī-pāda, Thagana, Bhāde (Bhaṅde), Dhamma, Mahī-pā, Śabarī-pā, Kambala, Cāte-pā, Kaṅkāli, Mīna-pā, Acinda (Acintya), Gorakṣa, Coraṅghi, Vīṇā, Tanti, Śiali (Śṛgālī), Ajoki, Paṅkaja, Ḍombi-pā, Kukkuri, Karmarī, Cārpaṭi, Jālandhari, Kantharī, Luñcaka, Garbha-pāda (Garbharī), and others.

It is therefore clear that most of the Siddhas are historical personages and are authors of works on their special modes of *sādhanā* (spiritual practice), which are preserved either in the original or in Tibetan translations.

THE DATE OF THE SIDDHAS

We also know something definite about the age in which they lived. The first Siddha in the list, Luyī-pāda (Lūhi-pā), was, in all likelihood, the same as Matsyendra Nātha of other traditions. An attempt has been made elsewhere[7] to show that Matsyendra lived about the beginning of the tenth century A.D. Siddha Nāgārjuna lived in the tenth century, and Cārpaṭi also lived about the same time.[8] Tilo-pā was a contemporary of King

[4] P. C. Bagchi, 'Materials for a Critical Edition of the Old Bengali Caryā-padas'. *Journal of the Department of Letters* (Calcutta University), XXX.

[5] P. C. Bagchi, *Dohākośa*, I.

[6] Carelli, *Sekoddeśa-ṭikā* (Gaekwad's Oriental Series).

[7] *Kaulajñāna-nirṇaya*, Introduction, p. 27.

[8] Tucci, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1930, p. 137; Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, I. p. 81,

Mahīpāla I of Bengal (*c.* 988-1038), and Nāro-pā was his disciple. Jālandhari and Kāṇhu-pā (Kāṇha-pā) lived also about the middle of the eleventh century.[9] The first Siddha lived in the tenth century and the most famous Siddhācāryas in the tenth and eleventh centuries. It thus appears that the period when the Siddhas, more familiarly known as Siddhācāryas, flourished was between the tenth and the twelfth century. It is almost certain that many of them were contemporaries, and were developing, in collaboration with each other, the mystic doctrines of the new school to which they belonged. The great majority of them, to all appearances, lived in the eleventh century.

PLACE OF THE GURU IN THE SIDDHA TRADITION

What was the special form of mysticism they adhered to? As the main part of the literature is still unknown to us, it is difficult to answer the question. A thorough study of the Tibetan translations can alone throw light on the problem. So far as can be gathered from the few texts discovered till now, it seems that the general trend of the teachings of the Siddhācāryas was esoteric. Nobody, except a qualified *guru* or preceptor, was allowed to initiate the disciple in the mysteries. This is why even in modern times the few followers of this school in Nepal call themselves *gubhāju* or *gurubhāju*, i.e. the followers or worshippers of the *guru*. They distinguish themselves from the followers of the Brāhmaṇical faith, who are called *devabhāju*, i.e. the worshippers of the god. The literature of the school is full of such statements as 'the truth that is free from duality is taught by the *guru*', 'there is nothing unattainable for the man whom the *guru* favours', 'the truth is clearly revealed through the instruction of the *guru*', and so forth. The texts clearly testify to the exalted position the *guru* enjoys in this scoool. But there is also a warning to the *guru* too. Siddha Saraha-pāda says: 'You should not initiate a disciple so long as you do not know yourself. If you do that, you will do like the blind man who, while trying to lead another blind man, drove him into a well and himself also fell into it.'

Though the *guru* was given that exalted position, it was no easy task for him to lead the disciple to this goal. He had to find

[9] *Kaulajñāna-nirṇaya*, Introduction, pp. 26-27; *History of Bengal* (Dacca University), I. pp. 326 ff,

out the special spiritual aptitude of the disciple and suggest to him the mode of *sādhanā* most suitable for him. In the analysis of the spiritual aptitudes of various types of disciples, the Siddhas seem to have arrived at a novel classification called *kula*. *Kula* symbolizes the special spiritual leaning of a disciple, and is the same as 'psychic energy'. There are five such *kulas*, technically called *ḍombī*, *naṭī*, *rajakī*, *caṇḍālī*, and *brāhmaṇī*. The nature of these *kulas* is determined by the five *skandhas* or the essences of the five basic elements (*mahābhūtas*) constituting the material *existence of the being*. The five *kulas* are the five aspects of the *prajñā*, which is the same as the *śakti* of the Brāhmaṇical Tantras. The *śakti* assumes five different forms according to the predominance of each of the five *skandhas* or constituents, and the best course for the *sādhaka* is to follow up his special *kula* or *śakti* during his spiritual march. In the technical language of the school, it is said that the five classes of *sādhakas* should carry on their mystic practice 'in the company of the five *prajñās*, called *ḍombī*, *naṭī*, *rajakī*, *caṇḍālī*, and *brāhmaṇī*'. They have been represented as female associates in the matters of *sādhanā*, and this has often led to many misleading interpretations of the mystic lore.

THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OF THE SIDDHAS

The question now arises, What was the *sādhanā* in which the *guru* had to initiate his disciple? This *sādhanā* involved the practice of a new form of *yoga* which seems to have evolved in the hands of the Siddhācāryas. According to it, there are thirty-two *nāḍīs* or nerve-channels within the body. It is believed that the psychic energy, which has its seat below the navel, flows up into the topmost station within the head through these channels. The topmost station is called *mahāsukha-sthāna* (the place of great bliss). Various names are given to the nerve-channels, such as *lalanā*, *rasanā*, *avadhūtī*, *pravaṇā*, *kṛṣṇarūpiṇī*, *sāmānyā*, *pāvakī*, *sumanā*, *kāminī*, etc. Of these the first three, *lalanā*, *rasanā*, and *avadhūtī*, are the most important and combine in themselves, at particular stations, the currents supplied by the rest. The *avadhūtī* is the middlemost channel and corresponds to the *suṣumṇā* of the Brāhmaṇical Tantras. The other two correspond to the *iḍā* and *piṅgalā*.

According to this system, there are also a number of stations, compared either to lotuses or wheels, within the body, and the psychic energy in its upward march has to pass through them. The topmost station is imagined to be a lotus having either sixty-four or a thousand petals. These stations are sometimes compared to places of pilgrimage like Uḍḍiyāna, Jālandhara, Pūrṇagiri, and Kāmarūpa. The intention probably is to discourage travel to distant lands to acquire religious merit as also to acquire a sense of the sanctity of the body with its different centres standing for different places of pilgrimage.

The ultimate goal is the creation of the state of *sahaja* which is one of great blissfulness. It is a state which is without beginning and without end, and a state which is free from duality. When this state is attained, the objective world disappears from view and all the aggregates, elements, and senses merge in it. The *sādhaka* then finds himself to be the sole reality, identical with the universe, identical with the Buddha—a being who is ever free. Everything else dwindles into nonentity.

METHODS OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION OF THE BODY

These are some of the main characteristics of the mysticism professed by the Siddhācāryas. It should, however, be remembered that mysticism is something which is highly personal. So in matters of practice every mystic has his own way of approach, and this gives rise to varieties in the method of *sādhanā*. In the system of the Siddhācāryas, the attainment of the highest goal meant also certain perfections of the physical apparatus, and hence a good deal of emphasis was placed on the *kāya-sādhanā*. The *kāya-sādhanā* involved attempts to bring about the transubstantiation of the body. Later followers of the Siddhācāryas carried this theory and practice to an extreme, and were thus concerned only with the means of attaining a perfect, changeless, and imperishable body which would help them to live long. But it is clear from the writings of the Siddhācāryas that they themselves never put so great an emphasis on this aspect of the *sādhanā*.

The Siddhācāryas believed that the perfection of the body could be attained in various ways. The most important of them was an upward movement of the *bodhicitta* (semen virile). When the psychic force moves upwards, a sort of introversion of the faculties (*parāvṛtti*) takes place. In that state the *bodhicitta* also

can be made to move upwards to the topmost station within the head. This practice, which aims at saving every drop of the *bodhicitta*, the very essence of physical and spiritual existence, leads to the attainment of a perfectly calm mind and an imperishable body. This practice led to the discovery of a number of ancillary methods, which have been described in the writings of the Siddhācāryas in a symbolic language.

The cultivation of the *bodhicitta* was not wholly unconnected with certain alchemical practices. One of the Siddhas, Nāgārjuna, was reputed for introducing alchemy in matters of *sādhanā*. Within the body, it is the *bodhicitta* which is the most important and, at the same time, the most restless *rasa*, and the attempt to carry it upward to the topmost station lies in converting it into a hard element (*vajra*), and thus destroying its restless character. Outside, it is mercury (*pārada*) which symbolizes the *bodhicitta*, and the alchemist tries to find out means of converting it into a hard metal (for example, gold) and using it for the transubstantiation of the body. The two methods, the esoteric and the exoteric, were complementary.

Besides these, the Siddhācāryas seem to have introduced other novelties in their system of spiritual exercises, but it is at present difficult to follow them, on account of the symbolical character of the language in which they are described.

IX

ŚAKTI CULT IN SOUTH INDIA

K. R. Venkataraman

KORRAVAI-DURGĀ-BHAGAVATI

KORRAVAI and Aiyai are the names by which the Mother Goddess was known to early Tamil writers. The Eyinar and the Maravar, two ancient Tamil warrior classes, propitiated Her as the Goddess of victory by bloody sacrifices, human and animal, accompanied by ritual, music, and dancing. Her priestesses danced a weird dance, called the *veṭṭuvavari*, and, in the course of the performance, predicted what evils might befall the community and how they could be averted. She was also adored as the 'Goddess round whom the *tunaṅgai* (another old folk-dance) was danced'—She whose great womb gave birth to Śeyon, the Red-god (later identified with Skanda), resplendent with yellow ornaments, who killed the cruel demon on the expanse of the white waves of the sea. Heroes returning from battle placed their swords at Her feet as a thanks-offering.

The earliest Tamil literary works depict a society the culture of which is a composite one—a blend of the pre-Aryan with the Aryan. Vedic and Āgamic ideas altered the old forms of worship in the Tamil country during the early centuries of the Christian era; and Korravai, the Tamil Goddess of war and victory, was easily identified with Durgā. The *Śilappadikāram*, a Tamil epic of about the sixth century, describes Her as the 'three-eyed Goddess whose crown is adorned with the crescent moon, whose lips, red as the coral, are parted in a beatific smile, whose waist is encircled by a serpent, whose arm wields the trident, and whose feet, bedecked with anklets, rest upon the severed head of Mahiṣāsura'. 'Praised by the gods and sages, She of the dark colour is the embodiment of victory, *dharma*, and wisdom.' 'Dwelling in the forest, She, who cleft asunder the hard bosom of Dāruka, witnesses the dance of Her spouse, the lord of Kailāsa.' According to the *Maṇimekalai*, another Tamil epic of the same period, priests, garbed as Bhairavas, officiated in Her worship, chanting Tāntric *mantras*. Hailed as the Magna Mater, She is

also the eternal Virgin, enshrined in Kanyākumārī, one of the oldest shrines in the Tamil country dedicated to Durgā, mentioned by Pliny and the author of *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea.*

Among the numerous sculptures that stand as monuments to the cultural greatness of the Pallava and Pāṇḍya rule, from the seventh to the ninth century, are the panels, representing Mahiṣamardinī, carved in the monolithic and cave temples of South India.[1] The Goddess is generally represented with a benign countenance, eight-armed, astride Her lion, and aiming a spear at the demon. In the Śiva temples of the early Cola period, a separate sub-shrine was assigned to Durgā, and in the later epochs, a shrine or niche to the north of the sanctum, where She is generally represented with four arms and standing on the head of Mahiṣa.

The Ṛg-Vedic Goddess Vāc was addressed in early Tamil literature as Cintā Devī. She was later called Kalaimagal, the Goddess of learning and arts. There are also references to Śrī or Lakṣmī, the Goddess who manifested Herself from the depths of the ocean, and who, seated on the breast of Viṣṇu, blesses those pure men who are free from the evil passions of lust and avarice. The conception of Durgā as the primordial Śakti and of Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī as Her aspects became familiar; and thus in Durgā the devotee visualized the triple aspect of power, beneficence, and wisdom. Here is the power that not only subdues and controls evil, but also elevates and emancipates.

The members of the famous mediaeval trading corporation, known as the *nānādeśīyatiśai-āyirattu-aiñ-ñūrruvar* ('the "fiave hundred" from different countries and the thousand quarters'), were worshippers of Bhagavatī Durgā, in whose honour they erected temples in different parts of the Deccan and South India. In one such temple in the Tamil country,[2] She is called Aiyāpolil Parameśvarī—the Parameśvarī of Aihole, where a famous Durgā temple was built by the early Cālukyas. To the Tamil members of this corporation, Durgā was *kandali*, a Tamil word meaning the divine Principle, beyond form and name and transcending all manifestations.

[1] At Madattukkovil in the former Pudukkottai State and at Namakkal. There is a famous Mahiṣamardinī panel at Mamallapuram.

[2] At Kallampatti, about twenty miles to the south-west of Pudukkottai.

While the common folk propitiate Durgā under different local names, too numerous to mention, and install Her as the guardian deity of villages, the initiated pray to Her for liberation.[3] She is invoked in one or other of Her nine forms (Navadurgā), or as Bhadrakālī, the auspicious Mother who transcends time and causation, in the lustrous flame, or in a *yantra* (mystic diagram), or in figures drawn with rice-flour, turmeric powder, and saffron; and the worship includes all the Tāntric rituals beginning with self-purification (*bhūtaśuddhi* and *ātmaśuddhi*) and ending with oblations (*bali* and *homa*). Along with *bīja mantras*, the *ṛcas* (hymns) of the *Durgāsūkta* are often chanted.

MINOR ŚAKTIS

There are reminiscences in South Indian temples of minor Śakti cults. The larger temples of the Pallava and early Cola period had shrines dedicated to the Saptamātrkās (Seven Mothers) and to Jyeṣṭhā. The Saptamātṛkā group comprised seven Devī idols–Brāhmī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Māhendrī, and Cāmuṇḍā, with Gaṇeśa and Vīrabhadra on either side of the group. Jyeṣṭhā was represented as two-armed with a male attendant. Her banner bore the crow. These two cults disappeared by about the eleventh century, and all that remain of them are the neglected, and often mutilated, statues in the corridors of old temples.

To the common folk, who can scarcely comprehend the conception of a primordial Śakti, the hosts of village and old totem gods and goddesses are the objects of reverence, and the higher classes also occasionally participate in their worship. These divinities are much dreaded, and are propitiated to ward off calamities. Māriamman, the southern counterpart of Śītalā, is perhaps the most popular and is held in great dread as the goddess of smallpox.

The memory of chaste women was held in great respect. Arundhatī was praised in old Tamil songs. Draupadī is a common deity in South Indian villages, where an annual festival, lasting for eighteen days, is held in her honour, when the *Mahābhārata* is read. On the last day of the festival, votaries, with their heads

[3] 'Afraid of the pangs of worldly life, I bow unto Thee, who helpeth me cross the ocean of earthly existence' (*namāmi bhavabhīto'haṁ saṁsārārṇavatāriṇīm*).

adorned with flowers and their bodies decked with sandal and saffron, walk over a very hot fire extending many feet in length. A whole canto of the *Śilcppadikāram* has for its theme the deification of Kannagi, the virtuous wife of the hero, Kovalan. This cult of the *paṭṭinī* (virtuous wife) spread from the Tamil land to Ceylon. Similar honours were paid to women who performed *satī*, and places where this rite was performed were called *mālaiyīḍu* (*mālai*, garland), because garlands were offered to their souls. To this day, Tamil homes cherish, at least once a gear, the memory of *sumaṅgalis* (those who predeceased their husbands) with worship and feasting.

Religious rites in the Tamil country were a mixture of sacrifice, music, and dancing. There are numerous references in Tamil inscriptions to *kūttus* or dance-plays enacted in connection with temple festivals; perhaps the most important among them was the *śāntikūttu*. Folk-dance and drama are even today associated with temple worship in South Indian villages.

ŚRIVIDYĀ-LALITĀ

South Indian Śaiva philosophy is a complex of many factors, three of which are of outstanding importance—first, the simple religion of the hymnists, known as the Nāyanārs, proclaiming the doctrine of pure love and self-surrender to the Lord's grace; secondly, the Tamil Āgamas, largely influenced by the Pratyabhijñā school of Kashmir, though with certain marked metaphysical differences; and thirdly, the doctrines of the Pāśupatas and Kālāmukhas, the followers of Lakuliśa. The *Pratyabhijñā-Sūtra* was freely drawn upon by both the Śaiva and Śākta devotees. While the Śaiva aspect was elaborated in the *Sivadṛṣṭi* and the later works based on it, the Śākta aspect was developed in such works as the *Cidghana-candrikā* and *Tantrāloka*. A much later Śākta treatise, based on the *Pratyabhijñā-Sūtra*, is the *Kāmakalā-vilāsa*.

The Śākta philosophy and rituals, expounded in Kashmir Tāntric treatises, in such works as *Candrakāla-vidyāṣṭaka* and *Subhāgamapañcaka* and in Gauḍapāda's *Subhagodaya*,[4] relate

[4] The *Lalitopākhyāna*, which, together with the two exquisite *stotras*, *Lalitā-sahasranāma* and *Lalitā-triśatī*, is said to form the *Rahasyakāṇḍa* or 'the Book of Secret Doctrines' of the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, contains the teachings of Hayagriva to Agastya, which are said to have been imparted in Kāñcī

to what is compendiously known as *śrīvidyā* or *Brahmavidyā*, which is rather the practical course or *sādhanaśāstra* not only of the monism of the Upaniṣads, but also to a large extent of the final liberation expounded in the Siddhānta (Tamil Śaiva philosophy). According to the Śaivas and Śāktas, Śakti is not different from Śiva, and they together constitute the ultimate Reality. Śiva or Kāmeśvara is *prakāśa* or subjective illumination, while Śakti, known as Kāmeśvarī, Śivakāmā, Kāmakoṭī, Lalitā, and Tripurasundarī, is *vimarśa* or Śiva's objective experience of Himself. This experience, in which 'I' or *aham* (subjective) and 'this' or *idam* (objective) are yet held in a unity, i.e. in which there is just a glimmer of a universe in idea, but no actual emergence of an objective world, is the first emanation of consciousness, known as *sadāśiva-* or *sādākhyatattva*, Sadāśiva functioning with and through His Śakti, Manonmanī. The next emanation is *īśvara-tattva* with *māyā-śakti*, in which objectivity begins to prevail and from which ultimately, through different stages of evolution, emerge the *tattvas* or the different categories of mind, senses, and matter, leading down finally to the *pṛthvī-tattva* as in the Sāṁkhya system. In iconographic symbolism, the *liṅga* stands for *sādākhya* or *sadāśiva*, and the other forms (i.e. full-fledged images) of Śiva for the *īśvara-tattva*. Since *sadāśiva-tattva* comprises both Sadāśiva and Manonmanī, the need was felt for the representation of the latter in places of worship, and this accounts for the erection of a separate shrine to Devī, commonly known in the Tamil country as the Amman (Mother) shrine. These Amman shrines, which in the old Tamil inscriptions are mentioned as the *kāmakoṭṭam* (Kāmakoṭī's shrine), came into vogue from about the eleventh century. Before this time there were temples dedicated to Devī, independent of and not related to Śiva shrines, but from about this time the twin shrines of Śiva and Amman came to represent the dual aspect of Śiva-Śakti.

The six forms of *saguṇa* worship, approved and propagated by Śaṅkara,[5] included the worship of Devī. In the *Saundarya-*

Obviously the author of the work is a South Indian. The work must have been written after the eighth century.

[5] One of the epithets of Śrī Śaṅkara is *ṣaṇmatasthāpanācārya*, i.e. the *ācārya* who has established the six cults, viz. Śaiva, Śākta, Vaiṣṇava, Saura, Gāṇapatya, and Kaumāra. In South India the Kumāra or Skanda cult, being very popular, could not be ignored: the Smārtas, however, admit the other

laharī and some of his *prakaraṇas*, he expounded Her greatness and Her identity with the Ātman or Brahman. In all the Advaitic monasteries, founded by Śaṅkara and his successors, among whom Vidyāraṇya is perhaps the most outstanding, the mystic secrets of *śrīvidyā* and the worship of the *śrīcakra* are kept alive to this day. At Sringeri, one of the four oldest seats of the monastic order founded by Śaṅkara, the presiding deity Śāradā, who is enthroned on a *śrīcakra*, symbolizes the highest knowledge, 'the knowledge of the Self' (*Sarvavedāntārtha-prakāśinī Brahmavidyā Śāradā*).

Tradition ascribes to Śaṅkara and other seers the installation of the *śrīcakra* in important temples. The most celebrated is that in the Kāmākṣī temple at Kāñcī, known as the *kāmakoṭipīṭha*, a replica of which is worshipped by the *gurus* of the Kāñcī Advaita monastery, later transferred to Kumbakonam. In the *cid-ākāśa-rahasya* in Chidambaram, there is a *sammelanacakra*, a combination of *śivacakra* and *śrīcakra*. There is a *śrīcakrapīṭha* at Courtallam, and at Avadaiyarkovil (Tanjore District) worship is offered to the *pādukā* or sandals of Devī installed on a *śrīcakra*. In Jambukesvaram, near Tiruchirapalli, the Devī's ear-ornaments are of the shape of *śrīcakras*. This list may easily be multiplied.

About two centuries after Vidyāraṇya, Appaya Dīkṣita (sixteenth century) attempted to harmonize the monistic schools of the Vedānta and the Siddhānta or Āgama schools. His synthetic doctrine, known as the Ratnatrayaparīkṣā, explains how the attributeless Brahman, through the play of His inherent Māyā, assumed two forms—*dharma* and *dharmin*.[6] While *dharmin* is static, *dharma* manifests itself both as male and female (as Viṣṇu and Devī); and this manifestation is the material cause of the universe. Through this doctrine he emphasized the identity of the Śaṅkara-Pārvatī (Ardhanārīśvara) and Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa concepts, which many centuries earlier had found expression in the hymns of the early Nāyanārs and Ālvārs and in the iconography of the seventh century. Nīlakaṇṭha, the grand-nephew of Appaya, was another great exponent of the *śrīvidyā* cult. Among later adepts was Bhāskararāya (seventeenth-eighteenth

five only and therefore practise *pañcopāsanā* or *pañcāyatanapūjā* (the worship of five deities).

[6] '*Nityaṁ nirdoṣagandhaṁ niratiśaya-sukhaṁ Brahma-caitanyamekaṁ, dharmo dharmīti bheda-dvitayamiti pṛthagbhūya māyāvaśena.*'

century) whose three works, *Lalitā-sahasranāma-bhāṣya*, *Varivasyā-rahasya*, and *Setubandha*, are aptly described as the *prasthāna-traya* of *śrīvidyā*, and among his disciples Umānandanātha, who wrote *Nityotsava-paddhati*, based on the *Paraśurāma Kalpa-Sūtra*, deserves special mention. Lakṣmīdhara's commentary on *Saundaryalaharī* is another important treatise on *śrīvidyā*. The five hundred verses in praise of Śrī Kāmākṣī of Kāñcī, sung by Mūkakavi, are a source of inspiration to the devotees of the Mother. Muttusvāmī Dikṣita and Śyāmā Śāstrin, two eminent composers, who rank among those who evolved and perfected Karṇāṭic music, were adepts in *śrīvidyā*.

MEDITATION ON LALITĀ

Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī, the presiding deity of *śrīvidyā*, is meditated upon as red in complexion with the brilliance of countless suns and the coolness of innumerable moons. She holds, in Her four hands, a sugarcane-bow symbolizing the mind (*manorūpekṣukodaṇḍā*), flowery arrows symbolizing the five primordial bases of the world of sense (*pañcatanmātra-sāyakā*), noose denoting attraction (*rāgasvarūpapāśāḍhyā*), and goad suggesting repulsion (*krodhākārāṅkuśojjvalā*). She sits on the lap of Śiva-Kāmeśvara, whose colour is white, because He is *prakāśa* (consciousness and illumination). The couch on which Kāmeśvara and Kāmeśvarī (Lalitā) sit is of the form of an inert corpse-like Śiva, dark in colour to represent colourlessness. He is *niṣkala* Śiva, the Absolute before He 'willed to manifest'. There is profundity in this conception of a *niṣkala* (static) Śiva and, above Him, the divine couple Kāmeśvara and Kāmeśvarī, the Being and the Power-to-Become, in close embrace.

Her subtle form is the *pañcadaśākṣarī*, the *mantra* with fifteen letters to which is sometimes added a sixteenth letter to make it *ṣoḍaśākṣarī*. This *mantra* is traced to the *Ṛg-Veda*,[7] and is eluci-

[7] *Ṛ. V.*, V. 47. 4 reads as '*catvāra īṁ bibhrati kṣemayantaḥ*', which means 'the four (priests), wishing benefit for themselves, worship this (god)'. But according to the orally transmitted tradition of some religious sects, the *mantra* is held to mean 'that which contains the four *īṁs* and confers bentfit' and to refer to the *śrīvidyā mantra* which fulfils this condition. The *pañcadaśākṣarī mantra* has three *kūṭas* or groups of letters. The first five letters '*ka, e, ī, la, hrīṁ*' form the first *kūṭa*, the next six '*ha, sa, ka, ha, la, hrīṁ*' the second *kūṭa*, and the last four '*sa, ka, la, hrīṁ*' the third *kūṭa*. The final letter of each of these three *kūṭas*, and the sixteenth letter *śrīṁ*, which is added, end in

dated in the *Tripurā* and *Devī Upaniṣads*. It is said to be the esoteric form of the *Gāyatrī mantra*, which is the quintessence of the Vedas and is identified with the *mahāvākyas* of the Upaniṣads. The votary of this *mantra* rouses the power (*cit-śakti*) latent in him, which represents the Jīva and is known as the *kuṇḍalinī*, lying coiled at the base of the spinal column (*mūlādhāra*). When aroused *kuṇḍalinī* penetrates the next four *cakras*, which are the centres of energy of the gross *tattvas* manifesting sensible matter, passes the sixth *cakra* or centre of the subtle mental *tattva*, and finally, reaching the *sahasrāra* in the head, unites with Śiva, where Jīva becomes one with Śiva.

Some of the holy shrines in the Tamil country symbolically represent these *cakras*. To mention a few at random: Tiruvarur represents the *mūlādhāracakra*: Kāñcī the *nābhi* (navel); Chidambaram the *anāhatacakra* (in the region of the heart); and Jambukesvaram, where Mother Akhilāṇḍeśvarī presides, the *ājñācakra* (in the region between the eyebrows). Madura (Madurai) is *dvādaśānta*, where Śrī Mīnākṣī manifests Herself in different forms as Bālā, Bhuvaneśvarī, Gaurī, Mātaṅgī, Śyāmā, Pañcadaśākṣarī, and Mahāṣoḍaśī, while Avadaiyarkovil represents *mahā-ṣoḍaśānta*, where Ātmanātha Śiva and Devī Yogāmbā are mediated upon as residing in the thousand-petalled lotus of the *sahasrāra*.[8]

SYMBOLISM OF ŚRĪCAKRA

Śrīcakra is a symbol of the universe (both macrocosm and microcosm) and its divine cause. There are in it two sets of triangles, one set composed of four male or Śiva triangles, and

īṁ. These are the four *īṁs*. *Īṁ*, which represents *kāmakalā*, is in itself an important *mantra*. Reference may be made in this connection to Naṭanānandanātha's commentary *Cidvallī* on the seventeenth verse of Puṇyānanda's *Kāmakalā-vilāsa*, where this alternative interpretation of this Vedic *mantra* is cited.

[8] *Dvādaśānta* and (*mahā-*) *ṣoḍaśānta* are two subtle centres in very close proximity to (or, according to some, within) the pericarp of the *sahasrāra-kamala* (thousand-petalled lotus in the brain). *Dvādaśānta*, as the term implies, is above twelve centres—the three higher centres, namely, *anāhata*, *viśuddha*, *ājñā*, and the nine subtle centres beginning from the middle of the forehead and going up to the *brahmarandhra*. The *dvādaśānta* represents *jñāna*, *sahaja-samādhi*, and transition from *turīya* to *turīyātīta* state, while *ṣoḍaśānta* represents the *nirviśeṣa Brahmavṛtti* or the *turīyātīta* state.

the other of the five female or Śakti triangles.[9] In the centre, which is a point (*bindu*), reside Kāmeśvara and Lalitā in *abheda* (undifferentiated) union. Enclosing the *bindu* is an inverted triangle representing the *icchā* (will), *kriyā* (action), and *jñāna* (knowledge) aspects of Śakti, the three *guṇas*, and the deities presiding over them. The other *cakras* are the *aṣṭakoṇa* (eight triangles), *daśāra-yugma* (two *cakras*, each of ten triangles), *manvaśra* (fourteen triangles), *aṣṭadala* (eight lotus petals), *ṣoḍaśadala* (sixteen lotus petals), *vṛttatraya* (three circles), and three squares. These nine *cakras* are ruled over by Yoginīs or divinities, presiding over forms of mind, sense, and matter, and their special functions, who are also called *āvaraṇa* (veiling) *devatās*, because they veil pure consciousness (*cit*) and create the appearance of the world of mind, sense, and matter, and make what is *pūrṇa* (whole and undifferentiated) appear as *apūrṇa* (limited and differentiated).

The prescribed *upāsanā* is according to the *saṁhāra* or *laya-krama* (method of absorption). The divinities of the eight *cakras* from the outermost squares to the innermost triangle, who are the Śaktis of the universe of sound and form, of the objects of experience by the Jīva, of the means of such experienee,[10] of the bodily *vṛttiṣ* or functions,[11] and of the mental *vṛttis* or the cognitive modifications of the mind,[12] are worshipped as but rays emanating from the central luminary, Śrī Lalitā, and are conceived of as being absorbed in Her.

Whether the worship is external, attended with rituals, or

[9] According to the *Kāmikāgama*, from the view-point of the microcosm, the Śakti triangles denote the five *dhātus*, namely, *tvac* (skin), *asṛj* (blood), *māṁsa* (flesh), *medas* (fat), and *asthi* (bone), and the Śiva triangles *majjā* (marrow), *śukra* (vital fluid), *prāṇa*, and *Jīva*; and from the view-point of the macrocosm, the Śakti-triangles stand for the five vital functions, the five senses of knowledge, the five senses of action, the five subtle and the five gross forms of matter, and the mind, while the Śiva triangles represent the four higher *tattvas*, viz. *māyā*, *śuddhavidyā*, *maheśvara*, and *sadāśiva*. For the thirty-six Śaiva-Śākta *tattvas*, see Sir John Woodroffe, *The Garland of Letters* (*Varṇamālā*), X (*Tattvas*) and XXVII (*Ṣaḍadhvās*).

[10] From the view-point of the macrocosm.

[11] From the view-point of the microcosm.

[12] From the view-point of the Dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vādin, who posits that the world is the creation of the mind as againt the view held by the Sṛṣṭi-dṛṣṭi-vādin, who says that the universe of embodied matter was created by the *jaḍa-śakti* of Īśvara.

internal, based upon meditation, emphasis is laid on *bhāva* or the mental certitude that the Mother withdraws unto Herself all the categories that She has projected to create the appearance of the phenomenal world. Now that the *sādhaka* has transcended all *vṛttis*, he realizes, in the *binducakra*, the Mother Lalitā Tripurasundarī as the supreme Essence in whom the static or absolute and dynamic or manifesting aspects coalesce (*prakāśa-vimarśa-parabrahma-svarūpiṇī*) and as the highest Bliss (*parāmṛtaśakti*).

In the *upāsanā* of *śrīcakra* are harmonized the personal and impersonal aspects of Brahman. Ritual and meditation lead to the knowledge of oneness, having gained which one attains to supreme Peace.

CREATION AS EXPLAINED IN THE TANTRA

J. G. Woodroffe

A psychological analysis of our worldly experience ordinarily gives us both the feeling of persistence and change. This personal experience expresses a cosmic truth. An examination of any doctrine of creation similarly reveals two fundamental concepts, those of Being and Becoming, Changelessness and Change, the One and the Many. In Sanskrit they are called the *Kūṭastha* and *Bhāva* or *Bhāvanā*. The first is the Spirit or Puruṣa or Brahman who is the true Being (*Sat*), pure consciousness (*Cit*) and pure, transcendental feeling or Bliss (*Ānanda*). According to Indian notions, the Spirit as such is and never becomes. It is Nature which is the subject of change. We may understand Nature in a two-fold sense: first as the root principle of the phenomenal world, that is, as the principle of Becoming and, secondly, as such world. Nature in the former sense is *Mūlaprakṛti* which means that which exists as the root (*Mūla*) substance of things before (*Pra*) creation (*Kṛti*) and which, in association with the Spirit (*Cit*), either truly or apparently creates, maintains, and destroys the Universe. This *Mūlaprakṛti*, the *Śāradā Tilaka* calls *Mūlabhūta Avyakta* and the Vedānta, (of Śaṅkara to which I alone refer) Māyā.

Nature in the second sense, that is the phenomenal world which is a product of *Mūlaprakṛti*, is the compound of the evolutes from this root substance which are called *Vikṛtis* in the Sāṁkhya and Tantra, and name and form (*Nāmarūpa*) by the Vedāntins who attribute them to ignorance (*Avidyā*). *Mūlaprakṛti* as the material and instrumental cause of things is that potentiality of natural power (*natura naturans*) which manifests as the Universe (*natura naturata*).

Touching these two Principles, there are certain fundamental points of agreement in the three systems which I am examining, Sāṁkhya, Vedānta and the Advaitavāda of the Tantra. They are as follows. Spirit or Brahman or Puruṣa as *Sat, Cit, Ānanda* is Eternal Conscious Being. It is changeless and has no activity (*Kartṛtva*). It is not therefore in itself a cause whether instrumental or material: though in so far as its simple presence gives

the appearance of consciousness to the activities of Prakṛti, It may in such sense be designated an efficient cause. So, according to Sāṁkhya, Prakṛti reflects Puruṣa and in Vedānta *Avidyā* of the three *Guṇas* takes the reflection of *Cidānanda*. On the other hand, the substance or factors of *Mūlaprakṛti* or Māyā are the three *Guṇas* or the three characteristics of the principle of Nature according to which it reveals (*Sattva*) or veils (*Tamas*) the Spirit (*Cit*) and the activity or energy (*Rajas*) which urges *Sattva* and *Tamas* to operation.

It also is Eternal, but is unconscious (*Acit*) Becoming. Though it is without consciousness (*Caitanya*), it is essentially activity (*Kartṛtva*), motion, change. It is a true cause, instrumental and material, of the world. But notwithstanding all the things to which *Mūlaprakṛti* gives birth, its substance according to Sāṁkhya and Tantra is in nowise diminished by the production of the *Vikṛtis* or *Tattvas*; the *Guṇas* which constitute it ever remaining the same. The source of all becoming is never exhausted though the things which are therefrom produced appear and disappear.

Passing from the general points of agreement to those of difference, we note, firstly, those between the Sāṁkhya and Vedānta. The Sāṁkhya which is commonly regarded as a dualistic system affirms that both Puruṣa and Prakṛti are real, separate and, except for the purpose of creation, independent principles. The Vedānta, however, says that there cannot be two principles which are both absolutely real. It does not, however, altogether discard the dual principles of the Sāṁkhya but says *Mūlaprakṛti*, which it calls Māyā, while real from one point of view that is empirically, is not truly real from another and transcendental standpoint. It affirms therefore that the only real (*Sadvastu*) is the attributeless (*Nirguṇa*) Brahman. All else is Māyā and its products. Whilst then the Sāṁkhya *Mūlaprakṛti* is an Eternal Reality, it is according to transcendental method of Śaṅkara an eternal unreality (*Mithyābhūtā Sanātanī*). The empirical reality which is really false is due to the *Avidyā* which is inherent in the nature of the embodied spirit (Jīva), Māyā is *Avastu* or no real thing. It is *Nistattva*. As *Avidyā* is unreal, so is its cause, Māyā. The world is then transcendentally unreal. The kernel of the Vedāntic argument on this point is to be found in its interpretations of the Vedic *Mahāvākya* "That Thou art" (*Tat tvam asi*). *Tat* here is Īśvara, that is Brahman with Māyā as His body

or *Upādhi*. *Tvam* is the Jīva with *Avidyā* as its body. It is then shown that Jīva is only Īśvara when Māyā or *Avidyā* is eliminated from the latter. Therefore, only as Brahman is *Tvam* the *Tat*: therefore neither Māyā nor *Avidyā* really exists (they are *Avastu*). For, otherwise the equality of Jīva and Īśvara could not be affirmed. This conclusion that Māyā is *Avastu* has far-reaching consequences both religious and philosophical and so has the denial of it. It is on this question that there is a fundamental difference between Śaṅkara's *Advaitavāda* and that of the Tantra which I am about to discuss.

Before, however, doing so, I will first contrast the notions of creation in Sāṁkhya and Vedānta. It is common ground in all the three systems that creation is the appearance produced by the action of *Mūlaprakṛti* or Principle of Nature (*Acit*) existing in association with the Spirit or *Cit*. According to both Sāṁkhya and Tantra, in *Mūlaprakṛti* or the potential condition of the natural Principle, the *Guṇas* are in a state of equality (*Sāmyāvasthā*) that is, they are not affecting one another. But as *Mūlaprakṛti* is essentially movement, it is said that even when in this state of equality, the *Guṇas* are yet continually changing into themselves (*Svarūpa-pariṇāma*). This inherent subtle movement is the nature of the *Guṇa* itself and exists without effecting any objective result. Owing to the ripening of *Adṛṣṭa* or *Karma* creation takes place by the disturbance of this equality of the *Guṇas* (*Guṇa-kṣobha*) which then commence to oscillate and act upon one another. It is this initial creative motion which is known in the Tantra as Cosmic Sound (*Parāśabda*). It is through the association of Puruṣa with *Mūlaprakṛti* in cosmic vibration (*Spandana*) that creation takes place. The whole universe arises from varied forms of this grand initial motion. So scientific "matter" is now currently held to be the varied appearance produced in our minds by vibration of and in the single substance called ether. This new western scientific doctrine of vibration is in India an ancient inheritance. "*Hrīṁ* the Supreme *Haṁsa* dwells in the brilliant heaven." The word "*Haṁsa*" comes, it is said, from the word *Hanti* which means *Gati* or Motion. Sāyaṇa says that It is called Āditya because It is in perpetual motion. But Indian teaching carries the application of this doctrine beyond the scientific ether which is a physical substance (*Mahābhūta*). There is vibration in the causal body, that is of the *Guṇas*

of *Mūlaprakṛti* as the result of *Sadṛśapariṇāma* of *Parāśabdasṛṣṭi* in the subtle body of mind (*Antaḥkaraṇa*); and in the gross body compounded of the *Bhūtas* which derive from the *Tanmātras* their immediate subtle source of origin. The Hiraṇyagarbha and the Virāt Sound are called *Madhyamā* and *Vaikhari*. If this striking similarity between ancient Eastern wisdom and modern scientific research has not been recognized, it is due to the fact that the ordinary Western orientalist and those who take their cue from him in this country are prone to the somewhat contemptuous belief that Indian notions are of "historical" interest only and as such a welcome addition possibly for some intellectual museum, but are otherwise without value or actuality. The vibrating *Mūlaprakṛti* and its *Guṇas* ever remain the same though the predominance of now one and now another of them produces the various 'evolutes called *Vikṛtis* or *Tattvas* which constitute the world of mind and matter. These *Tattvas* constitute the elements of the created world. They are the well-known *Buddhi, Ahaṁkāra, Manas* (constituting the *Antaḥkaraṇa*), the ten *Indriyas*, five *Tanmātras* and five *Mahābhūtas* of "ether" "air" "fire" "water" and "earth" which of course must not be identified with the notions which the English term connotes. These *Tattvas* are names for the elements which we discover as a result of a psychological analysis of our wordly experience. That experience ordinarily gives us both the feeling of persistence and change. The former is due to the presence of the *Ātman* or *Citśakti* which exists in us in association with *Mūlaprakṛti*. This is the *Caitanya* in all bodies. Change is caused by *Mūlaprakṛti* or *Māyāśakti* and its elements may be divided into the subjective and objective *Tattvas* or what we call mind and matter. Analysing again the former, we discover an individuality (*Ahaṁkāra*) sensing through the *Indriyas* a world which forms the material of its percepts and concepts (*Manas* and *Buddhi*). The objects of thought or "matter" are the varied compounds of the *Vaikṛta* creation which are made up of combinations of the gross elements (*Mahābhūta*) which themselves derive from the subtle elements or *Tanmātra*. Now according to Sāṁkhya, all this is real, for all are *Tattvas*. Puruṣa and Prakṛti are *Tattvas* and so are the *Vikṛtis* of the latter.

According to the Vedānta also, creation takes place through the association of the Brahman then known as the Lord or

Īśvara (*Māyopādhika-Caitanyam Īśvara*) with Māyā. That is *Cit* is associated with, though unaffected by, Māyā which operates by reason of such association to produce the universe. But really only the unchanging *Sadvastu* or Brahman exists. The ever-changing world is, when viewed by the spiritually wise (*Jñānī*) nothing but an unreal phantasm imposed by the world-dreamer on the changeless *Sat*. It is true that it has the quality of being in accordance with the greatest principle of order, namely that of causality. It is the *Sat*, however, which gives to the world-dream the character of orderliness because it is on and in association with that pure *Cit* or *Sat* that the world-dream plays. It is true that behind all this unreal appearance there is the Real, the Brahman. But the phenomenal world has no real substratum existing as its instrumental and material cause. The Brahman is no true cause and Māyā is unreal (*Avastu*). The world has only the appearance of reality from the reflection which is cast by the real upon the unreal. Nor is Īśvara, the creative and ruling Lord, in a transcendental sense real. For, as it is the Brahman in association with the world-dream, which Śaṅkara calls Īśvara, the latter is nothing but the Brahman viewed through this world-dream. It follows that the universe is the illusory product of the association of the real and the unreal and when this dream ends in liberation (*Mukti*) the notion of Īśvara as its creator no longer exists. For, His body is Māyā and this is *Avastu*. So long, however, as there is a world, that is so long as one is subject however slightly to the world-dream or is to any extent or in any degree embodied, so long do we recognize the existence of Īśvara. The Lord truly exists for every Jīva so long as he is such. But on attainment of bodiless liberation (*Videha-Mukti*) the Jīva becomes himself Saccidānanda and as such Īśvara does not exist for him since Īśvara is but the *Sat* viewed through the World-dream of which the *Sat* is free. "The Brahman is true, the world is false. The Jīva is Brahman (Paramātman) and nothing else."

The opponents of this system of *Māyāvāda* have charged it with being a covert form of Buddhistic nihilism (*Māyāvādam asacchāstraṁ pracbhannaṁ bauddhaṁ*). It has however perhaps been more correctly said that Śrī Śaṅkara adjusted his philosophy to meet the *Māyāvāda* of the Buddhists and so promulgated a new theory of Māyā without abandoning the faith or practice of his Śaiva Dharma.

All systems obviously concede at least the empirical reality of the world. The question is whether it has a greater reality than that and if so in what way? Sāṁkhya affirms its reality, Śāṅkara denies it in order to secure the complete unity of the Brahman. Each system has merits of its own. Sāṁkhya by its dualism is able to preserve in all its integrity the specific character of *Cit* as Niranjana. This result, on the other hand, is effected at the cost of the unity for which our mind has a kind of metaphysical hunger. Śaṅkara by his *Māyāvāda* secures this unity, but this achievement is at the cost of a denial of the reality of the world whether considered as the product (*Vikṛti*) of *Mūlaprakṛti* or as *Mūlaprakṛti* itself.

There is however another alternative and that is the great Tāntric doctrine of duality in Unity. There is, this Śāstra says, a middle course in which the reality of the world is in one sense affirmed without compromising the truth of the unity of the Brahman for which Śaṅkara by such lofty speculation contends. I shortly state here what is developed more fully later. The Tāntric *Advaitavāda* as distinct from that of Śaṅkara, recognizes the reality of *Mūlaprakṛti*, though it holds that *Vikṛti* is, in a sense, I state later, unreal. Here in a qualified way it follows the Sāṁkhya. On the other hand, it differs from the Sāṁkhya, in holding that *Mūlaprakṛti* or Māyāśakti is not a principle separate from the Brahman but exists in and as a principle of the one Brahman substance. The world therefore as mere appearance is not real in the Indian sense of that term but the ground principle of such appearance or Māyāśakti is real. There is thus a reality behind all apearance, a real natural substance behind its apparent transformations. And as Māyā which is the body of Īśvara is both eternal and real so is Īśvara. I pass now to the *Advaitavāda* of the Tantra.

Nature of Tantra

The Indian Tantra is not a formal system of philosophy (*Darśana*). It is in the broadest sense a generic term for the writings and various traditions which express the whole culture of a certain epoch in Indian History. The contents are therefore of an encyclopaedic character—religion, ritual, domestic rites, law, medicine, magic, and so forth. It has thus great historical value which appears to be the most fashionable form of

recommendation for the Indian scriptures now-a-days. The mere historian, I believe, derives encouragement from the fact that out of bad material may yet be made good history. I am not here concerned with this aspect of the matter. For my present purpose the Tantra is part of the *Upāsanā-kāṇḍa* of the three departments of Śruti and is a system of physical, psychical, and moral training, (*Sādhanā*) worship, and Yoga. It is thus essentially practical. This is what it claims to be. To its critics it has appeared to be a system of immoral indiscipline. I am not here concerned with this charge but with the doctrine of creation to be found in this Śāstra. Underlying however all this practice, whatsoever be the worth or otherwise which is attributed to it, there is a philosophy which must be abstracted as I have here done for the first time with some difficulty from the disquisitions on religion and the ritual and Yoga directions to be found in the various Tantras. The fundamental principles are as follows.

The equality (*sāmya*) of the *Guṇas* is *Mūlaprakṛti* which has activity (*Kartṛttva*) but no consciousness (*Caitanya*). Brahman is Saccidānanda who has *Caitanya* and no *Karttṛttva*. It is true therefore that considered in themselves and without reference to the other, they are separate, distinguishable and differently characterised Principles. But this is so only if we endeavour so to think of them. As a matter of fact, however, the two admittedly ever and everywhere co-exist and cannot, except for the purpose of formal demonstration, be thought of without the other. The connection between the two is one of unseparateness (*Avinābhāva Sambandha*). Brahman does not exist without Prakṛti or Prakṛti without the Brahman. Some call the Supreme *Caitanya* with Prakṛti, others Prakṛti with *Caitanya*. Some worship it as Śiva; others as Śakti. Both are one and the same. Śiva is the One viewed from Its *Cit* aspect, Śakti is One viewed from Its Māyā aspect. They are the "male" and "female" aspects of the same unity which is neither male nor female. Akula is Śiva, Kula is Śakti. The same Supreme is worshipped by *Sādhanā* of Brahman as by *Sādhanā* of *Ādyāśakti*. The two cannot be separated; for Brahman without Prakṛti is actionless and Prakṛti without Brahman is unconscious. According to Sāṁkhya, Prakṛti is eternal and so is the Māyā of Śaṅkara. There is *Niṣkala* Śiva or the transcendent attributeless (*Nirguṇa*) Brahman; and *Sakala* Śiva or the embodied immanent Brahman with attribute

(*Saguṇa*). *Kalā* corresponds with the Sāṁkhya *Mūlaprakṛti* or *Sāmyāvasthā* of the three *Guṇas* and the Vedāntic Māyā. But *Kalā*, which is *Mūlāprakṛti*, and Māyā eternally exists. Therefore when we speak of *Niṣkala* Śiva it is not meant that there is then or at any time no *Kalā*, for *Kalā* ever exists, but that Brahman is meant which is thought of as being without the working Prakṛti (*Prakṛteranya*). Māyā Śakti is then latent in It. As the Devī in the *Kulacūḍāmaṇi* says "*Ahaṁ Prakṛtirūpā Cet Cidānanda-Parāyaṇā*" *Sakala* Śiva is on the other hand Śiva considered as associated with Prakṛti in operation and manifesting the world. In one case *Kalā* is working or manifest; in the other it is not, but exists in a potential state. In the same way the two Śivas are one and the same. There is one Śiva who is *Nirguṇa* and *Saguṇa*. The Tāntric Yoga Treatise, *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa*, describes the Jīvātmā as the *Paryāya* of, that is another name for, the Paramātmā adding that the root of wisdom (*Mūlāvidyā*) is a knowledge of their identity. When the Brahman manifests it is called Śakti which is the magnificent concept round which Tantra is built. The term comes from the root "*Śak*" which means "to be able." It is the power whereby the Brahman manifests Itself and the Brahman Itself, for Śakti and possessor of Śakti (Śaktimat) are one and the same. As Śakti is Brahman it is also *Nirguṇa* and *Saguṇa*. The former is *Cit*-Śakti, that is *Cit* in association with the operating Prakṛti as the efficient cause of the creation; and Māyā Śakti which means Māyā as a Śakti that is in creative operation as the instrumental (*Nimitta*) and material (*Upādāna*) cause of the universe. This is the Śakti which produces *Avidyā* just as Mahāmayā or Īśvarī is the Great Liberatrix. These twin aspects of Śakti appear throughout creation. Thus in the body the *Cit* or Brahman aspect is conscious Ātmā or Spirit and the Māyā aspect is the *Antaḥkaraṇa* and its derivatives or the unconscious (*Jaḍa*) mind and body. When, however, we speak here of Śakti without any qualifications what is meant is *Cit*-Śakti in association with Māyā-Śakti, that is Īśvara or Devī or Mahāmāyā, the Mother of all worlds. If we keep this in view we shall not fall into the error of supposing that the Śāktas (whose religion is one of the oldest in the world; how old indeed is as yet little known) worship material force—gross matter. Īśvara or Īśvarī is not *Acit* which as pure *Sattvaguṇa* is only His or Her Body. Māyāśakti in the sense of *Mūlaprakṛti* is *Acit*.

In a certain class of Indian images you will see the Lord with a diminutive female figure on His lap. The makers and worshippers of those images thought of Śakti as being in the subordinate position which some persons consider a Hindu wife should occupy. This is however not the conception of Tantra according to which She is not a handmaid of the Lord Himself, being but the name for that aspect of His in which He is the Mother and Nourisher of the worlds. As Śiva is the transcendent, Śakti is the immanent aspect of the one Brahman who is Śiva-Śakti. Being Its aspect, it is not different from, but one with It. In the *Kulacūḍāmaṇi-Nigama*, the Bhairavī addressing Bhairava says "Thou art the *Guru* of all, I entered into Thy body (as Śakti) and thereby Thou didst become the Lord (*Prabhu*). There is none but Myself who is the Mother to create (*Kāryyavibhāvinī*). Therefore it is that when creation takes place sonship is in Thee. Thou alone art the Father who wills what I do (*Kāryavibhāvaka*); that is, She is the vessel which receives the nectar which flows from *Nityānanda*. By the union of Śiva and Śakti creation comes (*Śiva-Śaktisamayogāt Jāyate sṛṣṭikalpanā*). As all in the universe is both Śiva and Śakti (*Śivaśaktimaya*), therefore Oh Maheśvara, Thou art in every place and I am in every place. Thou art in all and I am in all." The creative Word thus sows Its seed in its own womb.

Such being the nature of Śakti the next question is whether Māyā as Śaṅkara affirms is *Avastu*. It is to be remembered that according to his empirical method it is taken as real but transcendentally it is alleged to be an eternal unreality because the object of the latter method is to explain away the world altogether so as to secure the pure unity of the Brahman. The Tantra is, however, not concerned with any such purpose. It is an *Upāsanā* Śāstra in which the world substance and its Lord have reality. There cannot be *Sādhanā* in an unreal world by an unreal *Sādhaka* of an unreal Lord. The Tantra replies to Māyāvāda: If it be said that Māyā is in some unexplained way *Avastu*, yet it is admitted that there is something, however unreal it may be alleged to be, which is yet admittedly eternal and in association whether manifest or unmanifest with the Brahman. According to Śaṅkara, Māyā exists as the mere potentiality of some future world-dream which shall rise on the ripening of *Adṛṣṭa* which Māyā is. But in the *Mahānirvāṇa-Tantra*, Śiva says to Devī: "Thou art Thyself

the *Parā Prakṛti* of the Paramātmā." (Ch. IV. v. 10). That is Māyā, in the sense of *Mūlaprakṛti*, which is admittedly eternal, is not *Avastu* but exists in the Brahman as one of two principles, the other of which is *Cit*. In *Niṣkala* Śivā, Māyā lies inactive. It manifests on and as creation, though *Cit* thus appearing with the three *Guṇas* is neither exhausted nor affected thereby. We thus find Īśvarī addressed in the Tantra both as Saccidānandarūpiṇī and *Triguṇātmikā* referring to the two real Principles which form part of the one Brahman substance. The philosophical difference between the two expositions appears to lie in this. Śaṅkara says that there are no distinctions in Brahman of either of the three kinds: *svagata bheda*, that is distinction of parts within one unit; *sajātīya bheda* or distinction between units of one class; or *vijātīya bheda* or distinction between units of different classes. Bhāratī, however, the commentator on the *Mahānirvāṇa* (Ch. II, v. 34) says that *Advaita* there mentioned means devoid of the last two classes of distinction. There is therefore for the purposes of Tantra a *svagata bheda* in the Brahman Itself, namely the two aspects according to which the Brahman is on the one hand, Being, Spirit, *Cit*; and on the other the principle of Becoming (*Acit*) which manifests as nature. In, however, a mysterious way there is a union of these two principles (*Bhāvayoga*) which thus exist without derogation from the partless unity of the Brahman, which they are. In short, the Brahman may be conceived as having twin aspects in one of which It is the cause of the world and appears to change and in the other of which It is the unchanging Soul of the world. Whilst the Brahman *Svarūpa* or *Cit* is itself immutable, it is yet the efficient cause of change in the sense that by the association of *Cit* with the *Māyik* principle in the Brahman substance Prakṛti creates the world.

But what then is "real", a term not always correctly understood? According to Indian notions, the real is that which ever was, is, and will be (*Kālatraya-Sattavān*); in the words of the Christian liturgy "as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end." Therefore that which changes, which was not, but is, and then ceases to be, is according to this definition unreal, however much from a practical point of view it may appear real to us. Now *Māyāvāda* calls *Mūlaprakṛti*, the material cause of the world, unreal (*Avastu*). The Tantra says that the Principle, whence all becoming comes, exists as a real

substratum, so to speak, below the world of names and forms. This māyā is an eternal reality: what is unreal are these names and forms (*Avidyā*), that is the changing worlds (*asattriloki-sadbhānaṁ svarūpaṁ Brahmaṇaḥ smṛtaṃ*—Chap. III, v. 7 *Mahā-nirvāṇa Tantra*). These are unreal for they are not permanent but come and go. The body is called Śarīra which comes from the root "*Śṛi*" "to decay"; for it is dissolving and being renewed at every moment until death. Again, however real it may seem to us, the world is unreal in the sense that it is something other than what it seems to be. This thing which I now hold in my hands seems to me to be paper, which is white, smooth and so forth, yet we are told that it really is something different namely a number of extraordinarily rapid vibrations of etheric substance producing the false appearance of scientific "matter". In the same way (as those who worship *yantras* know) all nature is the appearance produced by various forms of motion in *Prākṛtik* substance. The real is the Brahman which all things are (*Sarvaṁ Khalvidaṁ Brahman*), that is spirit, and that associated primordial Substance which in a way unknown to us exists in It but without derogation from Its partless spiritual unity. That this is not perceived is due to *Avidyā* or those limitations which are inherent in our nature as created beings (Jīva). The Brahman whether in Its *Cit* or Māyā aspect eternally and changelessly endures but *Avidyā* or *Saṁskāra* appears to break up Its undivided unity into the unreal, that is, the changing manifold world of name and form which are imputed to it.

It follows from the above that as Māyā is the body of Īśvara, the Īśvara-body is in Tantra eternal, though in dissolution (*pralaya*) it exists in a latent potential state. Whilst the phenomenal world is unreal, the world-principle or body of the Lord is an eternal reality. Īśvara is not therefore in the terms of the *Parāvidyā* of Śaṅkara a transitory appearance of the Brahman viewed through the veil. As the reality of *Mūlaprakṛti* is affirmed, the theory is in this sense dualistic (*Dvaitavāda*). But again it is monistic (*Advaitavāda*) for as Śaṅkara points out (Comm. *Śvetāsvatara Up*. 1.2) *Devātmaśakti*, the cause of the world, is not separate from the Paramātmā as Sāṁkhya alleges its *Pradhāna* to be. And thus it is that Śiva in the *Kulārṇava Tantra* (1.110) says: "Some desire dualism (*Dvaitavāda*), others monism (*Advaitavāda*). Such however know not My truth, which is beyond both monism

and dualism (*dvaitādvaitavivarjitam*)." This saying may doubtless mean that to the "knower" (*jñānī*) the arguments of philosophical systems are of no account as is indeed the case. It has also a more literal meaning as above explained. The Śastra in fact makes high claims for itself. The Tantra, it has been said, takes into its arms, as if they were its two children, both dualism and monism, affording, by its practical method (*Sādhanā*) and the spiritual knowledge generated thereby, the means by which their antinomies are resolved and harmonized. Its purpose is to give liberation to the Jīva by a method according to which monistic truth is reached through the dualistic world; immersing its *Sādhakas* in the current of Divine Bliss by changing duality into unity and then evolving from the latter a dualistic play thus proclaiming the wonderful glory of the Spouse of Paramaśiva in the love embrace of Matter (*Jaḍa*) and spirit (*Caitanya*). It therefore says that those who have realized this, move and yet remain unsoiled in the mud of worldly actions which led others upon the downward path. It claims therefore that its practical method (*Sādhanā*) is more specially fruitful than any other. Its practical method is an application of the general principles described above. In fact, one of its *Ācāras* which has led to abuse is an attempt to put into full practice the theory of *Advaitavāda*. Śaṅkara has in his transcendental method dealt with the subject as part of the *Jñāna Kāṇḍa*. Though the exponent of the *Māyāvāda* is esteemed to be a *Mahāpuruṣa*, this method is not in favour with the Tantric *Sādhaka* who attributes much of the practical atheism which is to be found in this country as elsewhere to the transcendental doctrines of *Māyāvāda*. There is some truth in this charge for, as had been well said, the vulgarization of Śaṅkara's "Higher Science" which is by its nature an esoteric doctrine destined for a small minority must be reckoned a misfortune in so far as it has in the language of the *Gītā* induced many people to take to another's Dharma instead of to their own which is the "Lower Science" of the great Vedāntin followed in all Śāstras of worship. Such a Śāstra must necessarily affirm God as a real object of worship. Dionysius the Areopagite, the chief of the line of all Christian mystics, said that we could only speak "apophatically" of the Supreme as It existed in Itself that is other than as It displays Itself to us. Of It nothing can be affirmed but that It is not this and not that. Here he followed the

"*ne'ti ne'ti*" of the Vedānta. Īśvarī, is not less real than the things with which we are concerned every day. She is for the Indian *Sādhaka* the highest reality and what may or may not be the state of *Videha Mukti* has for him, as the Tantra says, no practical concern. Those only who have attained it will know whether Śaṅkara is right or not; not that they will think about this or any other subject; but in the sense that when the Brahman is known all is known. A friend, from whom I quote, writes that he had once occasion to learn to what ridiculous haughtiness some of the modern "adepts" of Śrī Śaṅkara's school are apt to let themselves be carried away when one of them spoke to him of the personal Īśvara as being a pitiable creature. The truth is that such so-called "adepts" are no adepts at all being without the attainment and far from the spirit of Śaṅkara whose devotion and powers made him seem to be to his followers an incarnation of Śiva Himself. Such a remark betrays a radical misunderstanding of the Vedānta. Some of those who today discuss his Vedānta from a merely literary standpoint have neither his nor indeed any faith. What some would do is to dismiss the faith and practice of Śaṅkara as idle superstition and to adopt his philosophy. What is the intrinsic value of a philosophy which emanates from a mind which is so ignorant as to be superstitious? Śaṅkara however has said that faith and *Sādhanā* are the preliminaries for competency (*Adhikāra*) for the *Jñānakāṇḍa*. He alone is competent (*Adhikarī*) who possesses all good moral and intellectual qualities, faith (*Śradhā*), capacity for the higher contemplation (*Samādhi*), the Sāṁkhya discrimination (*Viveka*), absence of all desire for anything in this world or the next, and an ardent longing for liberation. There are few indeed who can claim even imperfectly all such qualifications. But what of the rest? There is no Vedic *Karmakāṇḍa* in operation in the present age but there are other Śāstras of worship which is either Vaidic, Tāntric or Paurāṇic. These provide for those who are still, as are most, on the path of desire. The Tantra affirms that nothing of worth can be achieved without *Sādhanā*. Mere speculation is without result. This principle is entirely sound whatever may be thought of the mode in which it is sought to be applied. Those to whom the questions here discussed are not mere matters for intellectual business or recreation will recall that Śaṅkara has said that liberation is attained not merely by the discussion of and pondering

upon revealed truth (*Vicāra*) for which few only are competent, but by the grace of God (*Īśvarānugraḥ*) through the worship of the Mother and Father from whom all creation springs. Such wosrhip produces knowledge. In the *Kulacūḍāmaṇi* the Devī says: "O all-knowing One, if Thou knowest Me then of what use the *Āmnāyas* (revealed teachings) and *Yajanam* (ritual). If Thou knowest Me not then of what use again are they?" But neither are without their uses for thereby the *Sādhaka* becomes qualified for some form of *Urddhvāmnāya* in which there are no rites (*Karma*).

With this short exposition of the nature of *Śakti-tattva* according to Tantra, I pass to an equally brief account of its manifestation as the Universe. There are some apparent varieties of detail in the various Tantras. Our present knowledge of this little known Śāstra is so small that it would be hazardous (even were it possible which is by no means certain) to construct a scheme with claims to represent their combined teachings. Nor is it necessary for the present purpose to do so. It is sufficient to deal with the main lines of the doctrine without going into their very great accompanying detail. I here follow on the main theme the account given in the celebrated *Sāradā-Tilaka* a work written by Lakṣmanācārya the *Guru* of Abhinava Gupta the great Kashmirian Tāntric about the commencement of the eleventh century and its commentary by the learned Tāntric Pandit Rāghava Bhaṭṭa which is dated 1454 A. D.

Why creation takes place cannot in an ultimate sense be explained. It is the play (*Līlā*) of the Mother. Could this be done, the Brahman would be subject to the law of causality which governs the Universe but which its Cause necessarily transcends.

The Tantra however in common with other Indian Śāstras recognizes *Adṛṣṭa Sṛṣṭi* or the doctrine that the impulse to creation is proximately caused by the *Adṛṣṭa* or *Karma* of Jīva. But *Karma* is eternal and itself requires explanation. *Karma* comes from *Saṁskāra* and *Saṁskāra* from *Karma*. The process of creation, maintenance, and dissolution according to this view unceasingly recurs as an eternal rhythm of cosmic life and death which is Mother's play (*Līlā*). And so it is beautifully said of Her in the *Lalitā Sahasranāma* that "the series of universes appear and disappear with the opening and shutting of Her Eyes." The existence of *Karma* implies the will to cosmic life. We produce it

as the result of such will. And when produced, it becomes itself the cause of it.

In the aggregate of *Karma*, which will at one period or another ripen, there is at any particular time some which are ripe and others which are not so. For the fruition of the former only creation takes place. When this seed ripens and the time therefore approaches for the creation of another universe, the Brahman manifests in its *viśvarūpa* aspect so that the Jīva may enjoy or suffer therein the fruits of his *Karma* and (unless liberation be attained) accumulate fresh *Karma* which will involve the creation of future worlds. When the unripened actions which are absorbed in Māyā become in course of time ripe, the *Vṛtti* of Māyā or Śakti in the form of desire for creation arises in Paramaśiva for the bestowal of the fruit of this *Karma*. This state of Māyā is variously called by Śruti, *Īkṣaṇa, Icchā, Kāma, Vicikitsā.*

It is when the Brahman "saw" "desired" or "thought" "May I be many" that there takes place what is known in Tantra as *Sadṛśa-pariṇāma* in which the Supreme *Bindu* appears. This in its triple aspect is known as *Kāmakalā* a manifestation of Śakti whence in the manner hereafter described the Universe emanates. This *Kāmakalā* is the *Mūla* or root of all *Mantra.* Though creation takes place in order that *Karma* may be suffered and enjoyed, yet in the aggregate of *Karma* which will at one time or another ripen, there is at any particular period some which are ripe and others which are not so. For the fruition of the former only creation takes place. As creation will serve no purpose in the case of *Karma* which is not ripe, there is after the exhaustion by fruition of the ripe *Karma* a dissolution (*Pralaya*). Then the Universe is again merged in Māyā which thus abides until the ripening of the remaining actions. *Karma*, like everything else, re-enters the Brahman and remains there in a hidden potential state as if it were a seed. When the seed ripens creation again takes place.

With *Īkṣaṇa* for the manifestation of creative will, creation is really instantaneous. When the "Word" went forth "Let there be light" there was light for the ideation of Īśvara is creative. Our mind by its constitution is however led to think of creation as a gradual process. The Sāṁkhya starts with the oscillation of the *Guṇas* (*Guṇakṣobha*) upon which the *Vikṛtis* immediately appear. But just as it explains its real *Pariṇāma* in terms of successive

emanations, so the Tantra describes a *Sadṛśa-Pariṇāma* in the body of Īśvara their cause. This development is not a real *Pariṇāma* but a resolution of like to like, that is there is no actual change in the nature of the entity dealt with, the various states of such *Pariṇāma* being but names for the multiple aspects to us of the same unchanging unity.

For the sake of *Upāsanā*, a development is described in Īśvara, but as it is apparent only it is really a species of *Vivartta*. What is called an evolution is but another name or aspect of that which is the immutable subject of such ideal process. Śakti is one. It appears as various by its manifestation in various functions. There can of necessity be no real *Pariṇāma*, for in the first place Saccidānanda or pure spirit is as such immutable. Before and after creation in every stage it remains what it was. There is therefore no real *Pariṇāma* in or of the *Akṣarabrahman* as such. Nor again, though Prakṛiti is the source of change, is it changing here. For Māyā considered as the body of Īśvara is undifferentiated, that is, such it is assumed not to change. And this must be so, for directly there is a real development (*pariṇāma*), the Jīva-body of *Avidyā* appears. Even the three *Guṇas* do not change each remaining what it is. They are the same in all forms but appear to the Jīva to exist in different combinations. The appearance of the *Guṇas* in different proportions is due to *Avidyā* or *Karma* which is this apparent *Guṇakṣobha*. The three worlds are *Asat*. It is *Saṁskāra* which gives to the *Sāmya Prakṛti* the appearance of an existence as *Vaiṣamya*. Īśvara is free of all *Avidyā*. What the Tantra describes as *Sadṛśa-Pariṇāma* is but an analysis of the different aspects of what is shortly called in other Śāstras *Īkṣaṇa*. The *Sadṛśa-Pariṇāma* is concerned with the evolution of what is named *Parā* Sound (*Parāsabdasṛṣṭi*). This is Cosmic Sound; the causal vibration is the substance of *Mūlaprakṛti* which gives birth to the *Tattvas* which are its *Vikṛtis*. Such cosmic sound being that which is distinguished in thought from the *Tattvas* so produced.

The *Sāradā* says that from the *Sakala* Parameśvara who is Saccidānanda issued Śakti. This Śakti is not in a sense co-extensive with the Parameśvara but is only that power of Him which is necessary for creation. God and His power are more than the creation which He manifests. Śakti is said to issue from that which is already *Sakala* or associated with Śakti, because as Rāghava Bhaṭṭa says, She who is eternal (*Anādirūpā*) existed in

a subtle state (as it were *Caitanya*) during the great dissolution (*pralaya*). The (*anādirūpā caitānyadhyāsena mahāpralaye sukṣma-sthitā.*). This important passage contains the whole teaching on this particular point. *Adhyāsa* is the attribution of the nature of one thing to another according to which something is considered to be what it is not. In other words, during *pralaya* there is some principle in the Brahman which is not *Cit* but which, owing to the absence of operation, is identified with it. *Cit* and Māyā appear as the former, the latter being suppressed.

With however the disturbance of the *Guṇas* Prakṛti became inclined (*ucchūna*) to creation and in this sense is imagined to issue. Śakti, in other words passes from a potential state to one of actuality. The Parameśvara is, he adds, described as Saccidānanda in order to affirm that even when the Brahman is associated with *Avidyā* its own true nature (*Svarūpa*) is not affected. According to the *Sāradā*, from this Śakti issues *Nāda* and from the latter *Bindu* (known as the *Parābindu*). The *Sāradā* thus enumerates seven aspects of Śakti. This it does according to Rāghava so as to make up the seven component parts of the *Oṁkāra*. In some Śākta Tantras this first *Nāda* is omitted and there are thus only six aspects. The Śiva Tantras mention five. Those which recognize *Kāla* as a *Tattva* identify *Nāda* with it. In some Tantras, *Kāla* is associated with it. In some Tantras, *Kāla* is associated with *Tamoguṇa* and is the *Mahākāla* who is both the child and spouse of *Adyāśakti*: for creation comes from the *Tāmasic* aspect of Śakti. In the *Sāradā Tilaka*, *Nāda* and *Bindu* are the same as Śakti, being the names of two of Her states which are considered to represent Her as being more prone to creation (*Ucchūnāvasthā*). These are two states of Śakti under which It creates (*upayoga-avasthā*). As there is no mass or *ghana* in *Niṣkala* Śiva and Brahman represents the *aghanāvasthā*, the *Prapañcasāra Tantra* says that She who is in the first place *Tattva* (mere "thatness") quickens under the influence of *Cit* which She reflects; then She longs to create (*vicikirṣu*) and becomes massive (*ghanibhūta*) and appears as *bindu Parābindu*. *Ghanibhūta* means the state of being with *ghana* (*Ghanāvasthā*). It involves the notion of solidifying, coagulating, becoming massive. Thus milk is said to become *ghanibhūta* when it condenses into cream or curd. This is the first gross condition (*sthūlāvasthā*). The Brahman associated with Māyā in the form of *Karma* assumes that aspect

in which It is regarded as the primal cause of the subtle and gross bodies. There then lies in it in a potential undifferentiated mass (*ghana*), the universe and beings about to be created. The *Parābindu* is thus a compact aspect of Śakti wherein action of *Kriyāśakti* predominates. It is compared to a grain of gram (*caṇaka*), which under its outer sheath (Māyā), contains two seeds (Śiva-Śakti) in close and undivided union. The *Bindu* is symbolized by a cricle. The *Śunya* or empty space within is the *Brahmapāda*. The supreme Light is formless but *Bindu* implies both the void and *Guṇa* for when Śiva becomes *Bindurūpa*, He is with *Guṇa*. Rāghava says "She alone can create. When the desire for appearance as all Her *Tattvas* seizes Her, She assumes the state of *Bindu* whose chief characteristic is action" (*Kriyāśakti*). This *Bindu* or *Avyakta* as it is the sprouting root of the universe is called the supreme *Bindu* (*Parābindu*) or causal or *Karaṇa Bindu* to distinguish it from that aspect of Itself which is called *Bindu* (*kārya*) which appears as a state of Śakti after the differentiation of the *Parābindu* in *Sadṛśa pariṇāma*. The *Parābindu* is the Īśvara of the Vedānta with Māyā as His *Upādhi*. He is the *Saguṇa* Brahman that is the combined *Citśakti* and *Māyāśakti* or Īśvara with undifferentiated Prakṛti as His *Avyaktaśarīra*. Some call Him Mahāviṣṇu and others the Brahmapuruṣa. Here is He Parama-śiva. "Some call this the Haṁsa Devī. They are those who are filled with a passion for her lotus feet." As Kālicaraṇa, the com-mentator of the *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa* says, it matters not what It is called. It is adored by all. It is this *Bindu* or state of supreme Śakti which is worshipped in secret by all *Devas*. In *Niṣakala* Śiva, Prakṛti exists in a hidden potential state. The *Bindu* or Parāśaktimaya (Sivaśaktimaya) is the first manifestation of crea-tive activity which is both the expression and result of the uni-versal *Karma* or store of unfulfilled desire for cosmic life.

It is then said that this *Parābindu* "divides" or "differentiates". In the *Satyaloka* is the formless and lustrous One. She exists like a grain of gram surrounding Herself with Māyā. When casting off (*utsṛjya*) the covering (*bandhana*) of Māyā She intent on creation (*unmukhī*), becomes twofold (*dvidhābhāgatva* or accord-ing to the account here given, threefold and then on this differen-tiation in Śiva and Śakti (Śiva-Śakti-*vibhagena*) arises creative ideation (*sṛṣṭikalpanā*). As so unfolding, the *Bindu* is known as the Sound Brahman (*Śabdabrahman*). "On the differentiation of

the *Parābindu* there arose unmanifested sound." (*Vidyamānāt parād vindor avyaktātmā ravo' bhavat*). *Śabda* here of course does not mean physical sound which is the *Guṇa* of the *Karyākāśa* or atomic *Akāśa*. The latter is integrated and limited, and evolved at a later stage in *Vikṛti pariṇāma* from *Tāmasika Ahaṁkāra*. *Śabdabrahman* is the undifferentiated *Cidākāśa* or Spiritual Ether of philosophy in association with its *Kalā* or Prakṛti or the *Sakala* Śiva or religion. It is *Citśakti* vehicled by undifferentiated Prakṛti from which is evolved *Nādamātra* ("Sound only" or the "Principle of Sound") which is unmanifest (*Avyakta*): from which again is displayed (*Vyakta*) the changing universe of names and forms. It is the Praṇavarūpa Brahman or *Oṁ* which is the cosmic causal principle of the manifested *Sabdārtha*. *Avyakta Nāda* or unmanifested Sound is the undifferentiated causal principle of manifested sound without any sign or characteristic manifestation such as letters and the like, which mark its displayed product. *Śabdabrahman* is the all-pervading impartite unmanifested *Nādabindu* substance, the primary creative impulse in Parāśiva which is the cause of the manifested *Śabdārtha*. This *Bindu* is called *Parā* because it is the first and supreme *Bindu*. Although it is Śakti like the Śakti and *Nāda* which precede it, it is considered as Śakti on the point of creating the world and as such it is from this *Parābindu* and not the states above it in the imaginary procession of Śakti that *Avyakta* Sound is said to come.

Rāghava Bhaṭṭa ends the discussion of this matter by shortly saying that the *Śabdabrahman* is the *Caitanya* in all creatures which as existing in breathing creatures (*Prāṇī*) is known as the *Śakti Kuṇḍalinī* of the *Mūlādhāra*. The accuracy of this definition is contested by the compiler of the *Prāṇatoṣinī*, but if by *Caitanya* we understand the manifested *Cit* that is the latter displayed as and with *Mūlaprakṛti* in cosmic vibration (*Spandana*) then the apperently differing views are reconciled.

The *Parābindu* on such differentiation manifestes under the threefold aspects of *Bindu*, *Nāda*, *Bīja*. This is the only development and kinetic aspect of *Parāśabda*. The *Bindu* which thus becomes threefold is the principle in which the germ of action sprouts to manifestation producing a state of compact intensive Śakti. The threefold aspect of *Bindu*, as *Bindu* (*Kārya*), *Nāda* and *Bīja* are *Śivamaya*, *Śivaśaktimaya*, *Śaktimaya*; *Tamas*, *Sattva*, *Rajas*; Moon, Fire and Sun; and the Śaktis which are the cosmic

bodies known as Īśvara, Hiroṇyagarbha, and Virāt. All three, *Bindu*, *Bīja*, *Nāda* are the different phases of Śakti in creation, being different aspects of *Parābindu*, the *ghanāvasthā* of Śakti. The order of the three Śaktis of will, action and knowledge differ in Īśvara and Jīva. Īśvara is all-knowing and therefore the order in Him is *Icchā*, *Jañāna*, and *Kriyā*. In Jīva it is *Jñāna*, *Icchā*, *Kriyā*. *Icchā* is said to be the capacity which conceives the idea of work or action, which brings the work before the mind and wills to do it. In this *Bindu Tamas* is said to be predominant, for there is as yet no stir to action, *Nāda* is *Jñāna* Śakti, that is the subjective direction of will by knowledge to the desired end. With it is associated *Sattva*. *Bīja* is *Kriyā* Śakti of the Śakti which arises from that effort or the action done. With it *Rajoguṇa* or the principle of activity is associated. *Kriyā* arises from the combination of *Icchā* and *Jñāna*. It is thus said "Drawn by *Iccāśakti*, illumined by *Jñānaśakti*, Śakti, the Lord appearing as Male creates (*Kriyāśakti*). From *Bindu* it is said arose Raudrī; from *Nāda*, Jyeṣṭhā; and from *Bīja*, Vāmā. From these arose ,Rudra Brahmā, Viṣṇu. It is also said in the *Gorakṣa Saṁhitā*, "*Icchā* is Brāhmī, *Kriyā* is Vaiṣṇavī and *Jñāna* is Gaurī. Wherever there are these three Śaktis there is the Supreme Light called *Oṁ*." In the *Sakala* Parameśvara or *Śabdabrahman* in bodies, that is *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti*. *Bindu* in which *Tamas* abounds is, Rāghava says, called *Nirodhikā*; *Nāda* in which *Sattva* abounds is called *Arddhendu* and *Bīja* the combination of the two (*Icchā* and *Jñāna*) in which *Rajas* as *Kriyā* works is called *Bindu*. The three preceding states in *Kuṇḍalinī* is *Cit* Śakti into which *Sattva* enters; a state known as the *Paramākāśāvasthā*. When She into whom *Sattva* has entered is next pierced by Rajas, She is called *Dhvani* which is the *Akṣarāvasthā*. When She is again pierced by *Tamas* She is called *Nāda*. This is the *Avyaktāvasthā*, the *Avyakta Nāda* which is the *Parābindu*. The three *Bindus* which are aspects of *Parābindu* constitute the mysterious *Kāmakalā* triangle which, with the *Hārddhakalā*, forms the roseate body of the lovely-limbed great Devī Tripurāsundarī who is *Śivakāmā* and manifests the universe. She is the trinity of Divine energy of whom the *Śrītattvārṇava* says: "Those glorious men who worship in that body in *Samarasa* are freed from the waves of poison in the untraversable sea of the Wandering (*Saṁsāra*)." The main principle which underlies the elaborate details here shortly summarized is this: The state in

which *Cit* and Prakṛti exist as one undivided whole, that is in which Prakṛti lies latent (*Niṣkala* Śiva) is succeeded by one of differentiation that is manifestation of Māyā (*Śakala* Śiva). In such manifestation it displays several aspects. The totality of such aspects is the Māyā-body of Īśvara in which are included the causal, subtle, and gross bodies of the Jīva. These are according to the *Sāradā*, seven aspects of the first of *Parā* state of Sound in *Sabdasṛṣṭi* which are the seven divisions of the Mantra *Oṁ*, viz: *A, U, M, Nāda, Bindu, Śakti, Śāntā.* They constitute *Parāśabdasṛṣṭi* in the Īśvara creation. They are Īśvara or *Oṁ* and seven aspects of the cosmic causal body; the collectivity (*Samaṣṭi*) of the individual (*Vyaṣṭi*) causal, subtle, and gross bodies of the Jīva.

Before passing to the manifested Word and its meaning (*Śabdārtha*) it is necessary to note what is called *Arthasṛṣṭi* in the *Avikṛti* or *Sadṛśa Pariṇāma*; that is the causal state of Sound called *Parāsabda*; the other three states, viz: *Paśyantī, Madhyamā,* and *Vaikharī* manifesting only in gross bodies. As *Parābindu* is the causal body of *Śabda,* He is also the causal body of *Artha* which is inseparably associated with it as the combined *Sabdārtha.* As such, He is called *Śambhu* who is of the nature of both *Bindu* and *Kalā* and the associate of *Kalā.* From Him issued Sadāśiva "the witness of the world" and from Him Īśa and then Rudra, Viṣṇu and Brahmā. These six Śivas are various aspects of *Cit* as presiding over (the first) the subjective *Tattvas* and (the rest) the elemental world whose centres are the five lower *Cakras.* These *Devatās* when considered as belonging to the *Avikṛti Pariṇāma* are the *Devatā* aspect of apparently different states of causal sound by the process of resolution of like to like giving them the semblance of all-pervasive creative energies. They are sound-powers in the aggregate (*Samaṣṭi*). As appearing in, that is presiding over, bodies they are the ruling Lords, of the individual (*Vyaṣṭi*) evolutes from the primal cause of *Śabda.*

The completion of the causal *Avikṛti Pariṇāma* with its ensuing cosmic vibration in the *Guṇas* is followed by a real *Pariṇāma* of the *Vikṛtis* from the substance of *Mūlaprakṛti.* There then appears the manifested *Śabdārtha* or the individual bodies, subtle or gross, of the Jīva in which are the remaining three *Bhāvas* of Sound or *Śaktis* called *Paśyanti, Madhyamā, Vaikharī. Śabda* literally means sound, idea, word; and *Artha,* its meaning, that is the objective form which corresponds to the subjective con-

ception formed and language spoken of it. The conception is due to *Saṁsāra*. *Artha* is the externalized thought. There is a psycho-physical parallelism in the Jīva. In Īśvara thought is truly creative. The two are inseparable, neither existing without the other. *Śabdārtha* has thus a composite meaning like the Greek word Logos which means both thought and word combined. By the manifested *Śabdārtha* is meant what the Vedāntins call *Nāmarūpa*, the unreal world of name and form, but with this difference that according to the Tāntric notions here discussed, there is underlying this world of name and form a real material cause that is *Parāśabda* or *Mūlaprakṛti* manifesting as the principle of evolution.

The *Śāradā* says that from the unmanifested root being in *Bindu* form (*Mūlabhūta avyakta bindurūpa*) of the *Parāvastu* (Brahman) that is from *Mūlaprakṛti* in creative operation there is evolved the Sāṁkhyan *Tattvas*. This *Tattva Sṛṣṭi*, as it is called, is regarded as real from the standpoint of Jīva, the notion of *Vikṛti* involving that of change just as the idea of *Cit* implies changelessness.

Transcendentally, creation of all things takes place simultaneously, and transcendentally such, things have only a *Māyik* reality. But from the standpoint of Jīva there is a real development (*Pariṇāma*) from the substance of *Mūlabhūta avyakta bindurūpa* (as the *Śāradā* calls *Mūlaprakṛti*) of the *Tattvas*, *Buddhi*, *Ahaṁkāra*, *Manas*, the *Indriyas*, *Tanmātras*, and *Mahābhūtas* in the order stated. The Tantra therefore adopts the Sāṁkhyan and not the Vedāntic order of emanation which starts with the *Apañcīkṛta Tanmātra*, the *Tāmasik* parts of which on the one hand develop by *Pañcīkaraṇa* into the *Mahabhūta* and on the other the *Rājasic* and *Sāttvic* parts of which are collectively and separately the source of the remaining *Tattvas*. In the Tantra the *Bhūtas* derive directly and not by *Pañcīkāraṇa* from the *Tanmātra*. *Pañcīkaraṇa* exists in respect of the compounds derived from the *Bhūtas*.

There is a further point of detail in the Tantric exposition to be noted. The Tantra, as the Purāṇas and Śaiva Sāstras do, speaks of a threefold aspect of *Ahaṁkāra* according to the predominance therein of the respective *Guṇas*. From the *Vaikārika Ahaṁkāra* issue the eleven *Devatās* who preside over *Manas* and the ten *Indriyas*; from the *Taijasa Ahaṁkāra* is produced the

Indriyas and *Manas*; and from the *Bhūtādi Ahaṁkāra*, the *Tanmātras*. None of these differences in detail or order of emanation of the *tattvas* have substantial importance. In one case, start is made from the knowledge-principle (*Buddhi*), on the other from the subtle object of knowledge the *Tanmātra*.

The above-mentioned creation is known as Īśvara *Sṛṣṭi*. The *Viśvasāra Tantra* says that from the Earth come the herbs (*Oṣadhi*), from the latter, food, and from food seed (*Retas*). From the latter, living beings are produced by the aid of sun and moon. Here what is called Jīva *Sṛṣṭi* is indicated, a matter into which I have no time to enter here.

To sum up, upon this ripening of *Karma* and the urge therefrom to cosmic life, *Niṣkala* Śiva becomes *Sakala*. Śakti manifests and the causal body of Īśvara is thought of as assuming seven causal aspects in *Sadṛśa Pariṇāma* which are aspects of Śakti about to create. The *Parabindu* or state of Śakti thus developed is the causal body of both the manifested *Śabda* and *Artha*. The *Parābindu* is the source of all lines of development whether of *Śabda* or as *Śambhu* of *Artha* or as the *Mūlabhūta* of the manifested *Śabdārtha*. On the completed ideal development of this causal body manifesting as the triple Śaktis of will, knowledge, and action, the *Śabdārtha* in the sense of the manifested world with its subtle and gross bodies appears in the order mentioned.

From the above description it will have been seen that the creation doctrine here described is compounded of various elements some of which it shares with other Śāstras and some of which are its own, the whole being set forth according to a method and terminology which is peculiar to itself.

Thus there *Adṛṣṭa Sṛṣṭi* up to the appearance of *śakti* as *Parābindu*. The theory which is a form of *Advaitavāda* has then characteristics which are both Sāṁkhyan and Vedāntic. With the latter it posits a *Nirgūṇa Ātmas* and Māyā in the sense that *Avidyā* produces an apparent changing diversity where there is a real unchanging unity. In this *Tāntric Advaitavāda*, three special points are: *Śaktitattva*, the reality of *Mūlaprakṛti*, *Sadṛśa Pariṇāma* which is a kind of *Vivarta*, and a doctrine of *Laya*. This development extends up to the appearance of the manifested *Śabdārtha*. In such development it posits a real principle of Becoming or *Mūlaprakṛti*. Thereafter it states a real *Pariṇāma* of the *Tattvas*

in general agreement with the Sāṁkhya .Other points of similarity with the latter system have been already noted. Lastly, there is *Yaugika Sṛṣṭi* of the Nyāya Vaiśeṣika in that the world is held to be formed by a combination of the elements. It accepts therefore *Adṛṣṭa Sṛṣṭi* up to the appearance of *Śakti*; *Vivarta Sṛṣṭi* up to the complete formation of the causal body known as the *Kāmakalā*; thereafter *Pariṇāma Sṛṣṭi* of the *Vikṛtis* of the subtle and gross body produced from the causal body down to the *Mahābhūtas;* and finally, *Yaugika Sṛṣṭi* in so far as it is the *Bhūtas* which in varied combination make up the gross world.

There are (and the doctrine here discussed is an instance of it) common principles and mutual connections existing in and between the different Indian Śāstras notwithstanding individual peculiarities of presentment due to natural variety of intellectual or temperamental standpoint or the purpose in view. Śiva in the *Kulārṇava* says that all the *Darśanas* are parts of His body and he who severs them severs His limbs. The meaning of this is that the six *Darśanas* are the six minds and these as all else are parts of the Lord's Body.

Of these six minds Nyāya Vaiśeṣika teach *Yaugika Sṛṣṭi*; Sāṁkhya and Patañjali teach *Yaugika Sṛṣṭi* and *Pariṇāma Sṛṣṭi*; Vedānta teaches *Yaugika Sṛṣṭi*, *Pariṇāma Sṛṣṭi* according to the empirical method and *Vivarta* according to the transcendental method. The Tantra includes all these various forms of *Sṛṣṭi* adding thereto an *Adṛṣṭa Sṛṣṭi* of the nature above described. In this sense it is their synthesis.

* Reproduced from *Prabuddha Bharata*, 1915, pp. 37–41 ; 72–76 ; 90–93.

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